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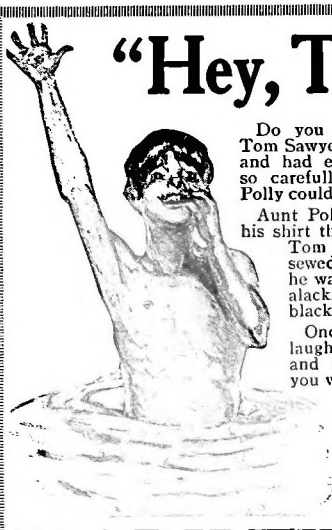

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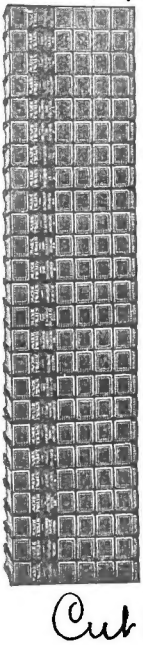

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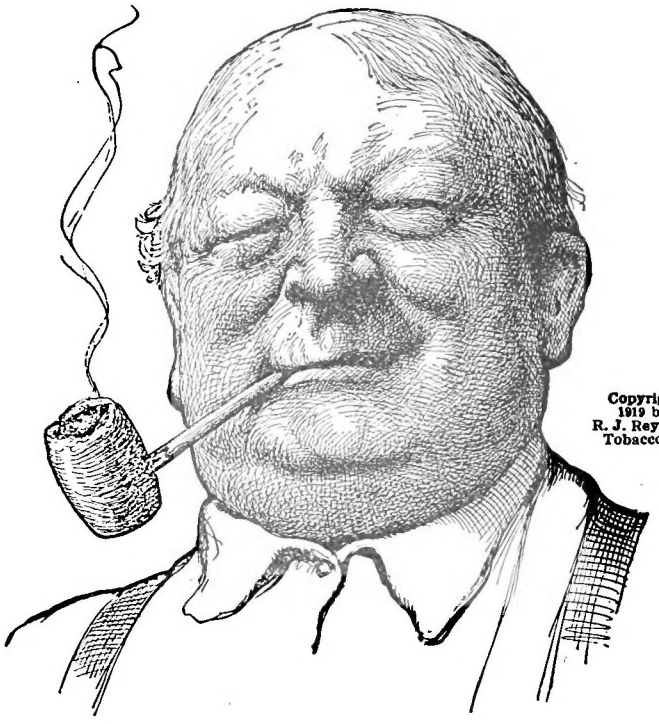

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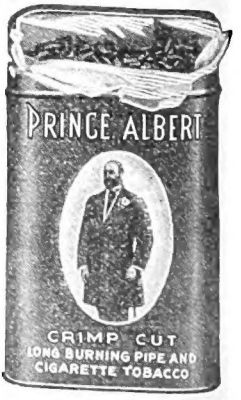

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DARING MEN IN DANGEROUS PLACES

BEYOND the Alleghanies lies a vast and virgin land. Spain wants it for a new empire. The Indians want it for themselves. The men at Washington think the United States has grown large enough. Yet there are pioneers who dare to go over the mountains and into the wilderness to work and fight for the country that is to be. Such a one is *"Chucky Jack" Sevier*, about whose part in the making of America Hugh Pendexter tells in "Red Belts," a two-part story beginning in our next issue.

KHLIT, the grizzled Cossack of the Curved Saber, thought little of women. But when the rider of the gray stallion, alone, doomed to death, shares salt and bread with him in the desert, the old warrior must needs see her through on her mysterious journey. "The Rider of the Gray Horse," a complete novelette by H. A. Lamb in the Mid-September *Adventure*.

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Adventure
Registered in United States Patent Office
Sept. 3. 1919
Vol. 22. No. 5

The SHRIEK of DÛM

An Up-and-Down-the-Earth Tale

A Complete Novelette

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "The End of the Bad Ship Bundesrath," *"On the Trail of Tippoo Tib," etc.*

THIS is the seventh of a series of tales, each a complete story in itself, in which an American and three English friends endeavor to gain by any honest means a large sum of money which is particularly needed by one of them, *"Monty" (Lord Montdidier).* In previous numbers they have won gold in spite of Portuguese colonial venality and German ante-bellum ruthlessness and scheming; have suffered shipwreck, have set out in quest of Tippoo Tib's famous hoard of buried ivory, and have found a part of it after experiencing the horrors of German East African military misgovernment. Now this story finds them in the Red Sea, in contact with a "shriek" who makes no noise, at a place whose solemn name is perfectly descriptive.

Each tale is complete and separate from all the others, but the same characters pursue in each the same persistent goal.

SOMEBODY up on the stilt-legged bridge gave a monosyllabic command that sounded like a bored remark. Somebody else, who wore boots on the high, hot fo'c'stle-head lest his feet be broiled, struck iron with a hammer; it sounded like a pole-ax blow in a lonely abattoir where they kill one beast a day. The rusty anchor splashed into water nearly warm enough for cooking. The rustier chain-cable roared through the hawse-pipe—checked—coughed—had a spasm—and was still.

Somebody else made another remark devoid of all enthusiasm, and the French tramp-steamer *Jean Marie* lay at anchor, three miles off shore. Then the sharks that had fled like lightning flashes came back to inspect the ground-tackle suspiciously

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and wait about for jetsam, as visible in the blazing sunlight as if they swam in air, not water.

Between ship and shore lay a line of irregular fanged reefs, in among which the oily sea sucked and ejected itself. Land was a dazzling wilderness of whitish-yellow sand, but, if one stared long enough through puckered eyes, a darker blur grew recognizable. The glasses showed distinctly a semicircular drab maze of flat-roofed dwellings packed closely between the beach and the barren cliffs behind.

"*Enfin*," said the captain of the *Jean Marie*, "what in name of sacred absurdity persuades you, *messieurs*, to go ashore at this polluted place? I am devour' of curiosity. *Voilà*—the voyage is over. Remains nothing but to explain to me the reason of it."

He did not look curious, except perhaps for the brown eyes that were as sympathetic as a dog's. He was a very hairy man, bearded and whiskered like most French sea-captains, and his shoulders, even in that hot climate under the soiled white jacket, gave the impression of being protected by several shirts at least. Yet they were perfectly mobile; their shrug in the direction of Dûm, the three-mile distant port, was liquid eloquence. Just as he had the softest, hairiest mustache, he had the whitest teeth imaginable, and his smile redeemed the landscape as he stood with a hand on either hip and his back to the bridge-ladder.

Monty smiled down on him from a shaven, smooth six feet, his black mustache waxed out to needle-points and his manner cool and good-natured in spite of the heat. There was never a great deal in common until recent years between the British aristocracy and members of the French class that manned Villeneuve's guns and yards previous to throwing kings into the discard—perhaps nothing whatever except mutual admission of each other's right to unintelligible points of view, and a simply splendid courage. But each race adores politeness in its own way, and each prefers above all things to be gentle and to please—also, be it noted, wholly in its own way.

"We haven't told any one our intentions, *mo'sieur*," Monty answered. "You might say they're vague. Can't tell you what we don't quite know ourselves, don't you know."

The captain laughed.

"*Eh, bien.* I come here because I am paid to—a most prodigious, unreasonable price or I would not have come. I go away again the minute after you are safely landed, just as fast as this slow old *Jean Marie* can take me with trembling boiler and quivering sides! That is because I know Dûm. It must be because you do not yet know it that you visit such a place—*hein?*"

"Undoubtedly," grinned Monty, and Fred Oakes, tossing a cigar overboard because tobacco in that temperature tasted like straw, came and leaned against the hot side of the chart-room—or whatever the French call the den where the ship's officers play cards of afternoons. A shark came and swallowed the cigar. Fred swore explosively and stood away from the paint-work. It had blistered him.

"If you'd told us you'd been to the place, Captain, we'd have told you all we know willingly in exchange for what you know," he said. "Didums, you oyster, limber up your French and explain to the cappy what we've come for."

"Why do you call him Didums?" asked the captain, vastly preferring his own English to our attempts at French. "Is that not what the English call baby-talk? He is so unlike a baby, that great, strong, tall, good-looking one, that so to name him is to laugh. Explain to me."

Whether or not because Fred was like himself, bear led—although not nearly so hairily—the captain liked him best of us four. He might have been expected to prefer Will Yerkes; French and Americans are ever friends in theory. But Will's swift summaries of the *Jean Marie's* defects had produced a sort of strained feeling that his offer to the engineer "to go over the old hooker and find some way of putting pep into her" had by no means relieved. But it was Will, with both hands in the pockets of colored flannel pants and a helmet pushed to the back of his head, who came to his assistance now and explained intricacies that are as Greek to the rank and file of either nation.

"Didums is short for Kirkoobrisher," he explained. "You spell that M-a-r-j-o-r-i-b-a-n-k-s and pronounce it Mundidger except on Tuesday and Friday afternoons. He's an earl, you know."

"*Mon Dieu!*" remarked the captain.

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The Earl of Montididier and Kirkudbrightshire extracted the bulky cigar case from Will's side pocket, emptied its expensive contents into the captain's hands and returned the case to Will.

"It's perfectly simple," he said.

"That name is simple? *Mon Dieu!* I call that ——"

"No, *mo'sieur.* I mean the reason of our being here."

"Then tell it to me, *mo'sieur* the Earl of Didums and Kirkoobreeches. I am in a mood to understand only very simple matters."

"Have you heard of King Solomon?" asked Monty.

"The gentleman who ruled Jerusalem?"

"Precisely."

"*Mo'sieur,* I have done more. I have pitied him. To have one wife is perhaps a privilege, at all events for the lady—but a thousand—*quel chaos!*"

"No doubt you recall," said Monty, "that King Solomon sent his men and his navies to some place then known as Ophir."

"But Dûm is not Ophir," said the captain. "Dûm is *Oh phui!* Very many bad smells to make a man spit and screw his nose up!"

"The legend we have heard," said Monty, "is that Solomon's navies used Dûm for a depot. The camel-trains are supposed to have come down here by routes long since vanished under blown sand, to meet the fleets with gold and ivory and spices. In case the legend is true, there ought to be discoverable traces."

"*Sacré nom de Dieu!* You will look for the traces of Solomon's mercantile marine?" He touched his forehead significantly. "You do not need money, for you have paid for the use of this ship like men to whom money is a bagatelle. You look for adventure? Permit me to observe that an expedition down the sewers of Paris or of London would provide danger more amusing and less insanitary! You look for discoveries—archieological—architectural—historical—cultural? Let me tell you, *messieurs.* These people of Dûm, if they ever had any history, are too much like animals—like great apes—to remember it!

"If these people of Dûm had ever any ancient architecture, then they have certainly pulled it down in order to make sides for cesspools or platforms for drying fish! If they ever had culture, it was that of vice, and believe me, they still pursue that with avidity! Discoveries? You will discover more different kinds of insects than your healthy imaginations permitted you previously to believe existed in all the universe. You will discover them, gentlemen, all in this one place—this place without a conscience, without scenery, without virtue, without happiness—this sink—this modern Sodom and Gomorrah combined in one—this Red Sea port of Dûm! I wish you joy of your adventures, gentlemen."

"Sounds appetizing," grinned Will. "Who runs the place?"

"Pardon, it does not run. It stands still. It knows neither progress nor retrocession, having reached the dead-level bottom of all iniquity."

"I mean, who owns it? Who governs it? Who rules it?"

"THREE different questions, *mo'sieur.* The devil owns it! Turkey pretends to rule it. A sheik governs it, in the name of Allah, by permission of the Turkish Government because the Turks have no means of preventing him."

"Tell us about the sheik, won't you?"

"His name is Abdul bin Mahmoud. He calls himself also 'The Wrath and the Flail of God,' and 'The Lord of the Limits of Decency.' They say his mother was a Persian, which accounts for the extravagant self-esteem. He has many wives—how many, it is possible he himself has quite forgotten. One of them was French, which accounts for my former visit to the place at a time when she expended the remnants of her fortune by mail in the Paris shops and caused the cases and bales of merchandise to come to her by steamer.

"She had a daughter—a pretty little daughter, perhaps at that time nine or ten years old, who spoke both French and English as well as Arabic and was so loved by the sheik that he would willingly have had me, for instance, burned alive for her sole amusement. The little girl was chic, sweet, amusing, lovely. The mother was a little faded. I interviewed the mother through a sort of window breast-high—so—with great armed guards uglier than Satan standing close to me for fear lest I run off with her and compromise the sheik's conjugal renown. The mother was a leetle more than faded, but not without a certain charm.

"As for papa the sheik, *messieurs,* if I

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should have to make choice between taking supper with him or in a den of untamable lions, I would hasten to find a forceps with which to pull lions' teeth; that is all! In making choice I would not hesitate a moment."

"How old would the daughter be now?" asked Will.

"Oh, perhaps sixteen—seventeen."

Will whistled, and the captain opened his mouth wide like a man confronted with proof of his own wrong-doing.

"Oh, là, là! See what folly to talk too much. Intending to offer wise advice, what have I done! I should never have mentioned Rosalie."

Will whistled again.

"Cappy," he grinned, "it's more than three years of wandering in unpleasant places since I set eyes on a genuine skirt. You say she talks English?"

"Yes—she did—a little—not very well."

"And her name is Rosalie?"

"Ah, I will say no more of her!"

"Too late, Cappy! I'd go and lamp the lady if I had to swim!"

"No need to feed sharks," laughed the captain. "Look."

A fleet of small craft was headed toward us from the shore, paddling for lack of wind enough to fill their ragged sails.

"Was she pretty when you saw her all those years ago?" asked Will.

"She was the loveliest, *mo'sieur*, the prettiest, the sweetest little mistress of a whole city on whom my eyes ever rested—so lovely that the sheik would have slain any one so rash as to disobey her whims. Even the mother I think he would have slain."

"She must be a half-breed, though," said I, knowing Will's racial prejudice along that line.

"Probably married long ago to a fat Greek trader or an Arab chief," added Monty. "They marry 'em young, you know, east of Vienna."

"As for marriage," said the captain with a shrug that expressed refusal to try to investigate the workings of destiny, "who can know? She was a little girl of spirit who would have her own way in all matters. But she was not half-breed—oh no, never!"

"Didn't you say the sheik was her father?" I asked. "We call a half-breed a person in whom the blood of the East and West is mingled."

The captain nodded.

"She is not half-breed. She was born in France or perhaps on board ship on the way from France. There was a *naufrage*—how do you call it—shipwreck, and this is no merciful coast for sinking ships. I do not know who the husband was; it is not always wise to inquire regarding such matters. Perhaps he was drowned on the ship—perhaps murdered—perhaps not. Who knows? The lady, the little Rosalie's mother, was made prisoner, and either she was compelled to marry the sheik or perhaps she made love to the sheik and persuaded him to marry her. Again who knows?

"Marriage is not a question of—what do you call it—red tape—in these parts. There is little ceremony. The lady steps behind a curtain, and if any other man ever sees her again it is either, as I saw this one, in the presence of armed guards on strictest business or else because the husband has grown too tired of her. Marriage is easy—divorce easier—murder easiest of all. Remain on my ship, gentlemen, and permit me to take you to safety in Suez—Alexandria—Marseilles."

"What was the color of Rosalie's eyes?" Fred inquired mischievously.

Will had turned his back to us and was gazing through the glasses toward shore.

"Blue!" said the captain. "Bluer than the sky in France in Summertime!"

Will faced about impatiently.

"Hair?" Fred inquired.

"Ah, I am growing old; I do not remember. I think it was of a certain shade between gold and brown."

"Just the very shade Will adores above all others!" Fred announced. "No, Captain, we decline your offer of a voyage toward safety, I'm afraid. Mr. Yerkes has made up his mind to go ashore. We have to look after him, be witnesses at the wedding, give evidence at the divorce-trial later on and all that sort of thing."

THE captain threw all our affairs, and all responsibility attached to them, from off his shoulders with a more expressive shrug than ever and walked aft to where an equally hairy mate was boring himself in attendance on the noisy winch. Our belongings—and they were very many—for the wise man does not

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travel too light to ports where no mail-steamers touch—were coming up from the after-hold and being deposited on the iron deck ready to be swung overside. The engine-room crew and the black cook emerged to stare and remark on our imbecility in French they probably imagined we could not understand. And presently the first of the oncoming shore craft grated alongside, its crew yelling for a rope and trying to find purchase for their fingers.

The captain ordered the hose got ready at once, a precaution the boatmen seemed to understand thoroughly.

"They have all the discommodities," he explained. "Smallpox—insects—sores—a bad smell—everything—as well as being bad thieves and expert at using the knife. No, they are not allowed on my ship!"

So a bargain was struck after a fashion I never saw before or since. Fred—our linguist—master of at least a dozen tongues and all their combined derivatives—was slung in a bosun's chair and lowered from the derrick until his legs were just out of reach of the boatmen's up-stretched hands. From that point of vantage he argued, bartered, swore, expostulated, abused, commanded, quoted the Koran, threatened not to come ashore at all and finally chartered a fleet of five crazy-looking boats to take us and our luggage at a price, in Maria Theresa dollars, that should have been sufficient to purchase the whole lot outright, crews and all.

Terms made, the captain wasted not another minute but ordered our things overside. Fred was hove inboard still exchanging insults with the boatmen, and Monty—always the most careful, as he was the least talkative or ostentatious of us—took his stand where he could overlook proceedings without annoying the mate, who was touchy regarding supervision.

Fred, once free of the bosun's chair, went to shooting craps with the colored cook by way of making him a present; he owed him gold in next to no time, and the cook's smile as he pouched the coin was more than "much fine gold." For that matter so was Fred's, who, when his guileless diplomacy chances to succeed, prefers that the world should know it.

Will and I paced the deck at the captain's right and left hand, he rather bored with us and we determined to extract from him the last few shreds of information.

"*Parbleu!*" he exclaimed, throwing his hands up after about the tenth question. "I have told you all I know. It is a devil of a place, this Dûm, hot, dry, unwholesome. No man in his senses would visit it except for business reasons."

"But why does anybody stay there?" I insisted.

"*Mon Dieu*, what a question!"

"The sheik must like it. He must have some way of keeping his subjects interested. What does he do? How does he get his revenues?"

"Revenues? He steals them!"

"From whom? From his subjects? Then where do they get wealth for him to steal?"

"*Sacré nom!* He was desirous even to make me—me understand—pay an import duty on the merchandise I was bringing to his own wife! If there were nothing else to steal they would remove the golden glimmer from the ripples on the sea."

"Is there no trade here?" Will asked.

"None any more. They have destroyed the oyster-beds that gave them pearls. What else have they to trade with?"

"Have they no cattle?"

"A few mangy camels. A few oxen that draw water from the wells—such lean oxen that they look like hungry dogs! A few lean goats. A very few sheep. Some chickens."

"And how many people?"

"That is the astonishing part—that so many disreputable characters can be found to submit to existence in such a spot—such a dirt-spot! There were at least five thousand people when I was there last."

"Do they take in each other's washing?" suggested Will.

"*Mon Dieu!* They never wash! None but the sheik and his wives and immediate entourage—and they only because the act causes trouble for the servants who must carry water! Therefore they wash very often and wear white clothes!"

"Linen?" Will suggested.

"Linen—fine cotton—silks."

"Where do they get them?"

"Oh, I suppose occasional steamers—now and then *dhows*—ships perhaps from Turkey or from Aden."

"How do they pay for them, if they have no more pearls and no wealth of any kind?"

"*Sacré nom d'un question*, how should I know? *Voilà!* Look! See! There the place lies, and there it stinks. There are

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the boats to take you ashore, *messieurs*. I wish you *bon voyage et bonne fortune!* It is only to be hoped you shall not be like the ladies who go to get married—a step behind a curtain—*poof*—good-by—oblivion!"

"Come along," called Monty. "They've only dropped one case into the sea so far, and that was tinned soup."

"Are the guns and ammunition safe?" Will asked.

"Yes. So's the dynamite. If we hadn't packed the guns in wooden boxes to look like anything but what they are, I suspect those boatmen would have bolted with them and left us to follow if we dared. Is your pistol where you can reach it in a hurry?"

Fred, Will and I patted the place where each preferred to keep his weapon.

"All right, then—down the rope one at a time—who goes first? I? Oh, very well. By-by Captain! *Au revoir!* See you again some day!"

"*Au revoir* I hope, *messieurs!* They say the good God cares especially for those who have not too great discretion!"

II

SO WE landed on the evil-smelling beach of Dûm, although not without preliminary incident. In the first place the boatmen claimed their craft were too heavily loaded already to permit our traveling together in one. Rather than waste time arguing in the hot glare with a hand on the rope and a foot on an unsteady boat's broken gunwale, we yielded the point. And, having separated us, they imagined us completely in their power.

Boatmen never were original. There were always good ones, always bad ones; not even pirates ever invented a new way of drowning passengers. No sooner clear of the ship's side and out of reach of possible rifle-shot than these ceased paddling and began to try to extort double the sum they had bargained for, with payment in advance, pointing significantly at the sharks that swarmed around us and actually nosed the boats.

Of course it was only a matter of pointing pistols at them—utterly unexpected pistols of a sort they had never seen—and then explaining what the pistols were. I shot a shark in the nose and, when that failed to kill him, again in the spine. Forthwith my boatmen became so eager to get the shark-meat before the other ravening monsters could tear and gorge it all that they nearly upset the boat. I snatched a paddle and, threats failing, had to begin actually to knock the nearest man overboard before he and the rest of them saw the point and consented to stick to business.

Then the men in the fifth canoe, having no passengers, imagined they could make away with the baggage and took a course almost at right-angles to ours. Moreover, our crews refused to give chase and head them off. For some reason they all doubted the length of range of Colt's repeaters.

So they had to be convinced. Will was our best shot with a pistol, but the sun was in his eyes. Intending to knock the paddle out of a man's hand on the deserting boat, he barked the skin of his breast and back with two shots. That was sufficient. The deserters elected to behave and paddled back among us, we taking station north, south, east and west of them to prevent any further tricks.

We came through a gap in the fangs of the reef by a miracle, the sharks crowding through after us, inconvenienced nearly as much as ourselves by the tidal suction in the shallow opening, "like a run of monstrous salmon," as Monty put it. And we landed on the filthy beach without any miracle at all by the simple process of upsetting everything and everybody into the surf and then racing to salvage the baggage before the undertow could suck it out of reach forever.

"There was a stone pier here once on a time," said Monty. "Look."

Great blocks of tough rock worn smooth by sea and sand lay half-covered, in positions clearly indicative of some long-ago forgotten purpose. The stuff resembled granite, although there was no sign of quarry or of anything but sand in the hills behind the town.

But we had no time then for archeology. We were pounced on by the riffraff of the town, who seized our belongings and bore them off with no regard whatever for our threats. Pistols pointed at them only made them laugh, and, as Fred said, "it would probably queer the luck if we began our activities in Dûm with murder." There was nothing for it but to follow with as much dignity as we could summon, picking our way gingerly amid the unspeakable filth of a Red Sea beach. The original Gehenna of

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the Jews can not have been more fly-inflicted.

From the steamer's deck the town had seemed to lie down by the water's edge, but actually there was almost a quarter of a mile of loose sand between the sea and the nearest dwellings. It was toward those that our possessions were being borne at top speed—a motley collection of flat-roofed, windowless shacks built all about a more pretentious building that boasted two rude towers and a sort of medieval fortification guarding the main door.

It was not the sheik's palace we were headed for, because that was perfectly obvious half a mile away—bigger and better built, with the Turkish crescent banner flying from the roof. Our destination proved to be a sort of punctuation mark at which all the straggling streets and alleys of Dûm came to an end, and, judging by the dirty, trampled condition of the sand, it was a more than ordinarily busy quarter of the town.

As we approached, a string of lean, solemn camels emerged from a gap in the wall of the largest building and betrayed the fact that the main entrance was either dummy or else kept closed. The gap in use was simply a break that had never been repaired; those who used it had even been too lazy to remove the débris, and the camels had to climb over it clumsily.

It was through that gap that our belongings were hurried: so through it we followed, to find ourselves in a great courtyard with a deep veranda along the greater part of all four sides and a broad open space in the midst of which the camels had been stabled. Our luggage was set down in a heap where the camels had been; we all four began counting the loads aloud at once, but could not determine whether anything was missing. Most important of all, though, perhaps, the guns and ammunition were there in their deceptive white-pine boxes.

ALL of the verandas but one were screened, for the most part with shabby-looking black cloth, although here and there was a touch of faded color. On the only open one stood four chairs that suspiciously resembled fittings from a ship's saloon, and toward those a nondescript individual motioned us with gestures that were half-insolence and half-obsequious salaam.

He was the dirtiest-looking scarecrow I had ever seen anywhere, although he wore a clean white cloth wrapped several times around his middle. The rest of his clothes, from the red fez stuck on the back of his head at an angle to the goatskin sandals, were almost falling from him with age and filth.

"You gents English?" he asked, with a sidewise, half-impudent glance at Monty.

We sat down, grateful for the shade, and stared at him. The men who had brought us ashore and the men who had carried our luggage squatted in the sun staring at us, waiting to be paid and clamorous with reasons why no sum anybody named could be enough.

"Are you?" demanded Monty.

"Hi was once. Hi ain't nothink now. Nobody's nothink in these parts," he added insolently.

"How do you come to be here?"

The man drew himself up and removed the twisted cigaret from behind his ear in a partly conscious effort to achieve dignity. He spoke slowly, giving the impression of having learned what he had to say by heart in preparation for just such a contingency.

"Hi come 'ere of me own free will, same as any man's entitled to. Hi stays 'ere to suit meself, an' it ain't no bus'ness o' nobody's. Hi've me rights, the same as any man."

"Why do you wear that fez?" demanded Monty.

He had evidently planned to create a great impression on all strangers, and being put through his paces visibly annoyed him. Given time he might have attained to a lofty arrogance, but just at the moment birth, education, memories, old habit and perhaps the remnants of wholesome shame had him all bewildered, and he answered like a culprit in the dock.

"Hi've a right to adopt hany religion I please! What diff'rence does it make whether you calls Gawd, Gawd or Allah? It's all one to me, and I takes no stock in the argyment 'at Gawd gives a —— one way or the other. Hi'm a Mohammedan, that's what Hi am—as good as any Christian or better."

"How long were you in the army?" asked Monty, with a slight change of inflection that ever so subtly suggested friendlier interest.

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"Hi never was in no army."

The man assumed a very deliberate, entirely unconvincing slouch.

"The whole world seems to be peppered over with the British army's relics!" said Will.

"It is," Monty agreed. "No better men breathe than the good ones. There are no worse blackguards than the broken ones; no worse liars—sots—thieves—tramps—idlers. But there's good in them all."

"Of course," nodded Will. "Every man has good in him. We all know that."

"That's not what I mean," said Monty. "These men who have been in our army have something more—something the army gave them in return for service rendered. The worst cases I ever met have always redeemed themselves when shown an opening."

If proof were needed that this man lied in denying he had ever served in any army, it was there in the manner of his standing—speechless while two other men discussed him like the commanding officer and a subordinate in an orderly-room.

"What do you do here?" asked Monty.

"Me? I works for Mr. Snoblauch."

It was on the tip of my tongue to ask who he might be and what he did, but Monty saw fit not to appear ignorant.

"In what capacity?"

"Ho, I'm a sort o' gen'ral manager—anything what turns up—anything what nobody else won't do or ain't able to do. I keeps a heye on all an' sundry."

"You're not well dressed for a man with responsibility," said Monty. "Doesn't your master pay you?"

"'Im?" said the nondescript, bridling visibly. "'E ain't my master! Hi don't call no man me master, let alone no old German 'uckster! Hi'm me own master!"

"I've a suit of English clothes in one of my boxes," said Monty, "that very likely might fit you with a bit of alteration here and there. Don't you think it would become you better than those rags you're wearing? More in line with self-respect, wouldn't it be? More in keeping with your race, and your past? It's not good for an old army man to slouch about in your garb."

"Hi tell you I weren't never in no army!" the man retorted.

"Polish up your memory," suggested Monty. "Think the offer over. I won't withdraw it for the present."

"'Tention all. This'll be Snoblauch," whispered Fred.

The nondescript faced about very much at his leisure with the deliberate purpose of asserting disrespect, and we all glanced across the courtyard toward where another individual was emerging through a gap between two shabby cloth curtains.

He came hurrying toward us with the tassel of an almost new red fez dangling over one eye, dressed in a suit of tweeds made in Europe donned in a great hurry—for one end of his suspenders dangled down behind—and carpet slippers that lent him an otherwise unexplainable air of benign senility.

He was a man of not more than middle age, although his beard and mustache were nearly white. His stomach gave notice of four meals a day and naps in the shade of afternoons, and he walked like a man unaccustomed to much exercise.

HE WAS all smiles that increased as he drew nearer, and he fairly ran across the last few yards of camel-desecrated compound.

"Velcome, *meine Herren!* Velcome, shentelmen! Vot a treat! No, no; sit down! My man here shall fetch me a chair. Go, Villiam—bring me at vonce a chair, *ja!*"

"Your brace is 'anging down, you old fool," announced the man addressed as Villiam. "'Ere, I'll show yer."

He seized the offending article and jerked at it so violently that it came away in his hand. He held it up, roaring with laughter until, seeing that no one else joined in, he ceased suddenly and stalked off with less than his usual slouch.

"Zat man is no good—terrible—but what can you expect to find in Dûm? Tell me your names, please. My own is Snoblauch—Walter Snoblauch, merchant, importer and perhaps Imperial German consul."

Villiam came back carrying the chair, an old cane-bottomed thing, swinging it aloft in one hand and whirling it to show at one and the same time indiscipline, strength of wrist and independence. He slammed it down behind Snoblauch and went and stood at a little distance, whistling.

We announced our names, Monty giving his as Montdidier, *tout court* without the handle, and Snoblauch addressed him thenceforward as *Herr* or else Mr. Mundidger, assuming for some inscrutable reason

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that I was the aristocrat of the party, perhaps because I said least, having least to say. In the days that followed he several times addressed me as "your lordship."

"And vy are you here?" he asked.

We told him.

"Archeology?" His eyes hardened. "There is none here. None whateffer!"

"We have already seen traces of a very ancient stone pier," I answered, but Monty promptly kicked my shin with his heel.

The change in the German's manner was astonishing. From garrulous hospitality he went to silent suspicion at a bound. One recognized the physical act of closing up his mind against us lest anything he might say should serve our purpose. And he set himself to study what our purpose might be with the sort of cunning of a child denied the key of a cupboard.

"Vy have you come?" he asked again. "What are in those boxes? What steamer brought you? Vhither has it gone? And vhen vill you go?"

"We'll go all right when we're ready," said Will. "Where can we get board and lodging?"

The German did not answer him but came over and stood in front of me.

"You tell!" he insisted, leveling a finger at me. "Tell me why you come and vhen you go."

I took a leap in the dark, so to speak, nervous lest Monty accuse me of telling too much again, yet judging it good policy to put our host at ease. And I accomplished the exact opposite of what I hoped, yet did no harm.

"We've some presents for Rosalie," I said. "We'll go away when we've Rosalie's permission."

"Rosalie?" he answered. "Oh, *Mein Gott! Mein Gott! Mein Gott! Wass für unsinn!*"

He snapped his fingers, made impatient noises through his teeth, paced up and down in front of us a time or two without saying a word and then went straight back across the dung-littered courtyard and disappeared between the shabby curtains. From behind them we could hear him denouncing somebody—us perhaps—in what sounded like mixed Arabic and German.

"And nothing said about dinner," remarked Fred.

"But Rosalie's in the land of the living," Will answered. "We've made sure of that."

"No, we haven't," said Monty. "Perhaps the idea of our bringing presents for a girl who is dead or gone away is what upset him."

Villiam the unclean, with snowy whiteness still about his middle and his fez at a more than ever impudent angle, came near and leaned against a veranda-pole that looked remarkably like a ship's spar. He stuck both hands deep in the pockets of his baggy Turkish pants, in hope of establishing by illustration how unmartial his past had been, and proceeded to prove what a fine sense he had of responsibility.

"The old fool's gone in to sulk an' study out a plan," he announced. "You've busted 'is schemes for fair!"

Nobody answered. It was hardly our business to prevent him from telling the secrets of the man whose salt he ate; so he continued.

"Soon as 'e seed you acomin' in the boats, 'e sets me to scarin' up natives to go an' grab your things an' bring 'em 'ere. 'E's got two ideas, 'e 'as, and 'is 'cad won't 'old no more. One is to be made the German consul 'ere—which they ain't got no consulate, nor no trade, nor nothin' at all, 'xcept a lot o' schemes, an' as long as 'e'll do their dirty work wi'out pay they'll let him, an' I've told 'im so a thousand times."

"What's the other?" I interrupted.

He seemed likely to wander off into accounts of his own long-sightedness.

"T'other's Rosalie! But she's too wide awake, besides bein' a judge of a man if ever I see one. The old fool thinks 'e can twist 'er round 'is little finger. Fact is she twists 'im. She'd 'ave 'ad the sheik scrag the old fossil long ago, on'y 'e gets books an' clothes an' pictures for 'er from Europe, an' she knows no other way o' gettin' 'em. 'E'd two reasons for 'avin' me set all the boys to grabbin' your things on the beach.

"One was to get you all 'ere afore Rosalie or 'er pa could 'ave first chin with you. T'other was to keep 'em all too busy to go a-runnin' to 'er wi' early inf'mation. But don't you worry. I sent a runner to 'er straight away quick—with orders! Now, about that suit o' clothes you was mentionin', sir——"

"About the sheik," said I. "Tell us about him."

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"HI CALLS 'im the shriek—the shriek o' Dûm! 'E's a shriek for fair, an' no argyment. 'F 'e weren't Rosalie's pa—or so 'e will 'ave it, although 'e ain't really nothin' o' the kind—I'd 'ave left this 'ole long ago. But, bein' as 'ow she's 'ere an' got no friends of 'er own color an' persuasion, why I stays 'an' puts up wi' the shriek an' old Snoblauch. When the shriek wants to 'ave me crucified or fed to the sharks or buried alive for gettin' 'alf-cocked an' singin' songs outside Rosalie's windows, she interferes.

"An', when Snoblauch seeks to 'ave me jailed for one thing or another, she interferes again. Which that's no trifle. You just ought to see the jail! Rosalie's no perishin' sister o' mercy, but, if it weren't for 'er, the shriek 'ud skin the devil an' make hell look like a drorin'-room! The shriek's the jimdandiest son of a rotten tomater ever I see! Now about that suit o' European clothes as you was speakin' of——"

The truth of a part of his story was established that very second by the arrival of messengers, who entered breathless through the gap without ceremony and without more than a glance in our direction began to order our unpaid boatmen and porters to shoulder our effects once more and follow them. They seemed to take it for granted we would not let our luggage out of sight.

"It's the same principle," said Fred, "that the chuckers-out use in London music-halls. Ever see them at work? They each take a tail of a man's dress-coat and haul on it; the second he hears the coat ripping up the back the very drunkest lunatic begins to come quietly!"

Monty laughed.

"The last time I drove to the Derby we passed a dozen donkey-carts whose 'mokes' were being persuaded to trot by a bunch of carrots on the end of a stick. Same idea! Well—what do you say? Shall we follow them and see?"

He got up from his chair to lead the way, but a big brute who looked about half-Somali, black as ebony and stronger than a bull, swaggered over to us and began jabbering orders at a great pace.

"What does he say is the matter with him?" asked Will.

"That's Rosalie's chief eunuch," announced Villiam. "'E says for you to come 'is way."

Monty sat down again promptly.

"Nothing to be gained by forgetting what is due to one," he said. "Tell that eunuch to take back word to his mistress that distinguished visitors are here, who expect distinguished treatment."

"What's the use?" demanded Villiam. "All 'e'll do is carry away your goods an' leave you flat."

"Did you hear what I told you to tell him?" Monty demanded, and Fred began in much too good Arabic to try to make the eunuch understand.

Seeing the job of interpreter being thus snatched from him, Villiam made all haste to translate the answer into the villainous patois that passed current for local speech. The eunuch instantly grew civil. By gesture more than words he sought to make us understand that we were invited, not commanded, to follow him, but Monty took no more notice than of the crows that perched along the roof. We took our cue from Monty and lighted cigars.

So the eunuch, looking worried and all in a shiny sweat with sense of responsibility, went off with our belongings, and we sat feeling like unwise virgins, as Fred described it, yet much more masters of the situation than we guessed.

"If we had followed that rascal," said Monty, "we'd have been given the raw end of everything until we leave town."

"We'll talk about leaving town," said Will, "after we've seen the baby-doll!"

As soon as our porters had vanished through the gap in the wall vainly clamoring for their pay, Snoblauch came slippering out again, no particle less suspicious but apparently convinced it was wisest to get on our soft side.

"*Mein Gott!*" he exclaimed, shaking two fists in the air. "Vat did zat man threaten you? Zat was Rosalie's eunuch. Did she send for you and you not go? You must be crrrrazy. I must make peace for you. I must interfere. I must protect your property and your persons. It is known I am to receive the appointment of imperial German consul. My authority is sufficient on that ground to save your situation. I will go. I vill expostulate. You vait here."

Before we could offer him any remonstrance he had gone slippering back to the veiled mystery of his private quarters, muttering and arguing to himself, with a hand held up as if to ward off impending disaster while he figured out a way to prevent it at

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its source. We heard him shout for a camel, but the camels were all gone. He roared for his donkey to be brought, but, although the donkey stood munching straw in dusty solitude in a corner of the courtyard, there seemed nobody to saddle and bring the beast.

He yelled for his sunshade, his smoked glasses and his elastic-sided boots—now in German, now in Arabic, now in English. Nobody obeyed him, although there were undoubtedly plenty of people behind the scenes, for we heard their voices.

"The old fool's in one of 'is tantrums," explained Villiam. "Later on 'e'll come an' threaten to 'ave me 'orse-whipped—which I'd like to see 'im dare try! 'E won't be fit to speak to until after Rosalie 'as give 'im a piece of 'er mind, an' then 'e'll cringe. Now, about that suit o' clothes as you was speakin' of. They've been an' took everything. Lord knows when you'll see a single thing again. If you was to mention to me in which o' those there packages the suit o' clothes was, maybe I might manage to swipe it and anything else you particularly fancied for yourselves at the same time. 'Ow would that be?"

But Monty was in unresponsive mood.

"You'll have to wait and see, my man," he answered.

Besides what we had in our pockets the only thing left to us was Fred's new concertina, obtained by parcels-post from London but a day before we started on the trip and considered so precious that he kept it within reach of his hand by day and night. It had not even been wetted when the boats turned over in the surf, for he held it high in the air.

HE UNDID the clasp now and began to while the time with music reminiscent of the London music-halls, of "smokers" in Cape Town and Johannesburg, of the Lisbon quays, of Paris cabarets, and of unauthorized, unadvertized entertainments in those strange parts of the world where, in times of stress, the King of England's junior officers forgather. There is absolutely no end to Fred's musical resources, just as there is no known port where you can land him and not find him unearthing friends within the hour.

Now he proceeded to make friends, there being none available of the vintage of other years. Villiam recalled old evenings in canteen and, speechless from reminiscence, strutted to and fro amid the camel dung posturing ridiculously, his baggy pants extended like a circus clown's and his feet pattering out the long-forgotten steps of jigs and breakdowns.

There began to be movement too behind the shabby curtains. Every once in a while a female head appeared—by no means always the same one—to be jerked back instantly in response to force applied from behind. A man with a long stick came to do guard duty in front of the curtains but became so enraptured by the music that he forgot to strike at outthrust female heads. We became on nodding terms with all the old German's harem, and Snoblauch came out himself at last, having discarded European clothes and arrayed himself in Arab dignity that suited him far better.

He seemed better able to enforce respect in that garb. Even Villiam ceased step-dancing and obeyed him, picking up camel's dung to throw at every female who dared discover herself.

"Oh, play somezing of Wagner," he begged. "It is longer since I heard somezing of Wagner than is good to remember!"

But Fred is no Wagnerian enthusiast and said so.

"Play, then, from Beethoven."

"Can't," said Fred.

"Play, then, '*Die Fruehling*'. No? You do not know that? Play, then, '*Die Wacht am Rhein*'."

Fred broke promptly into "Rule Britannia" and, since Will was considerate enough to hum the tune, followed it with "Yankee Doodle." Snoblauch paced up and down shaking his head.

"Zat 'Yankee Doodle' zing is not so insupportable," he said when Fred had finished. "Von of these bright days the United States is going to vake up and be German; zen zat tune vill be a German tune, and all is well. It is bright. It is lifely. It is not bad. But that zing 'Rule Britannia'—*phui!* Such jingoismus! I assure you that within a few years ze only connection British ships shall have vith the sea vill be to lie rrro'ting under it! Vait and see! Play somezing else!"

But Fred did not get the opportunity. Astonishing interruption intervened in the shape of Rosalie on camel-back, surrounded by hot, yelling natives, headed by the eunuch, who had run all the way through

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the sand and were one and all determined to get their effort's worth if not in entertainment, then in trouble. A more truculent, abominably noisy crowd surely never burst through a hole in a wall; nor was there ever a more refreshingly unconventional lady than their mistress.

She was not veiled, except for a gauzy brown affair to keep the sun from her face that she used artfully as an edge to loveliness. Amid a babel of yells the camel kneeled, and in little silken slippers and a dress that combined the East's appetite for coolness with Western love of freedom Rosalie stepped down and stared at us.

She answered faithfully to the French captain's description of her. Delight at the novelty of meeting strangers brightened her blue eyes and lent color to pale cheeks. The Red Sea coast is no complexion-maker, but protection from sun and wind had preserved her natural creamy whiteness. If her lips were not rouged, then she had stolen the color from the reddest Persian roses and kept it by some magic of her own.

Leaning back against the kneeling camel to get a better look at us four, she clapped her hands—little exquisite white hands, loaded with barbaric rings. Her little bare feet in the pale-blue slippers began to dance excitedly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Oh! Oh!" glancing from one to another of us.

Suddenly she laughed like a child and ran to Monty—threw both arms around him and upset the immaculate points of his mustache by kissing him repeatedly on the mouth. Before he could recover from surprize she had left him and was kissing Fred —then me.

"Oh, 'ow different you all schmell!" she exclaimed, looking at us admiringly.

Then she attacked Will and kissed him half a dozen times.

Monty accepted his dose philosophically enough, adjusted his mustache ends and was himself again. As the oldest of us—colonel of cavalry, politician, privy councillor—he might be expected to have his nerve under control and he had. Fred blushed like a schoolboy and giggled like a girl. I decline to record my own sensations. Will was the only one of us who acted like a man of flesh and blood. He stood up and gave her back more kisses than she had bargained for.

"Oh, you!" she laughed, pointing a finger at him as he set her down.

Except that his ears stick out, Will is a handsome young man, without Monty's dignified presence but with an ever-exuding glow of human spirits. She loved him on the instant, and we groaned as we watched.

"COME again, Rosalie!" he said and held his arms out.

She flung herself into them, and they clung lip to lip for half a minute.

"Vy arre you 'ere? Vot you come for? 'Ow long you stay?" she demanded, dropping her aitches after the manner of Villiam and murdering her consonants something after Snoblauch's way.

Will took her hand in his.

"We've brought you presents, sweetheart," he said, stealing my thunder without blinking.

"Where? Where?"

"In the baggage your savages took from us."

"They arre not safagees! They took nozzing! All zings haf been taken to a 'ouse beside my 'ouse. Vat else you come for?"

"We're just travelers, sweetheart—inquisitive people—come to have a look-see."

"Vot is zat—sweet'eart?" She flashed a look of indignant rebuke at Villiam, who winced under it. "You nevair told me, Villiam, vot is sweet'eart!"

"You bet yer life I didn't," he grumbled. "If old Snoblauch 'ad over'eard me a-tellin' yer what sweet'eart means, 'e'd 'a told yer pa, the shriek, an' I'd ha' been faced wi' a fine 'owdydo!"

"You tell me!" she coaxed, turning her back on the indignant henchman and looking into Will's eyes.

"Not here!" he laughed. "Later—somewhere else—when you know me better."

Nobody took the slightest notice of Snoblauch, who had slippered across the courtyard and was standing scandalized before us, his eyes ablaze with fury and his fists trembling with the vain, prodigious effort to suppress his feelings.

"Just at present—sweetheart," said Will, squeezing her hand and having his own squeezed in return, "we're anxious about board and lodging. We don't like these quarters. Is there a caravanserai?"

She laughed—just like a child at a party,

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pushing at his breast with both hands.

"Zere is ze 'ouse next to my 'ouse. You vill all come at vonce."

At that point Snoblauch saw fit to intrude objections and began a regular tirade in guttural Arabic. But she cut him short.

"*Malaish!*" she said—an Arabic word that means simply "it doesn't matter" but that can be made to mean a very world of insolence besides.

He resumed his flow of rhetoric, but she cut him short again by the swiftly simple expedient of spitting in his face three times. At that the ineffable Villiam set up a yelp of laughter, and all the black men jeered in chorus. Snoblauch exploded, shook both fists at the universe, rubbed the spittle from his face and backed away.

"Bah!" exclaimed Rosalie, spitting at him again. "Now I need you no longer to tich me Inglees, old *vache!* Now I nevair marry to your old Bedouin sheik of Urza! As for you yourself, you go to ——, as Villiam say it! I shall tell my papa you are no good—Germanee sausage, like Villiam also say it—cheat—tomfool—son-of-a——"

Will placed a hand over her mouth, and she made her teeth nearly meet in his finger by way of reprisal. He winced but refused to release her until the outraged German had departed in high dudgeon to his holy of holies. Will had kissed those red lips too recently to care to hear gutter-language flow from them.

"I hope she uses much worse words than that!" Fred whispered to me. "Let's pray she disgusts him utterly before tonight!"

But she was nothing less than charming as she turned away and began giving orders to the crowd, among whom we recognized the rascals who had paddled us ashore as well as those who pounced on our belongings. It occurred to Monty at that minute to commence paying them, sufficient time having elapsed to make them aware that their likes and dislikes were not the most pressing or important matters in the universe. But she commanded him to stop with a gesture that was positively regal, and the meekness with which that swarm of Red Sea pirates submitted to being deprived of pay they had earned was the best proof we had had yet of her power in the land.

It seemed she had brought donkeys for us to ride. She ordered them now brought in through the gap in the wall—fine, white Arabian beasts, saddled and bridled with fancy leather and not lean like Snoblauch's camels or his own particular donkey that munched straw in the corner. These were fit mounts for a journey home from Mecca.

"Again!" she said and held her arms out.

Will picked her up and kissed her to her heart's content—no meagerly measured dole! Then she sprang on her camel and commenced kicking and thumping while her uproarious following yelled to the beast to rise. We had to mount our donkeys in a hurry then, for they kicked and plunged to be off, and the men who were holding them let go to give chase to the camel. In another minute we were leaping and scrambling through the gap in the wall in full gallop after the camel, and he was a genuine riding-beast with speed and a gift for kicking up a cloud of dust behind him. White men striving to combine dignity with donkey-back and too-short stirrups are a sight for the god of practical jokes, and each could hardly ride for laughing at the other.

We rode through the streets of Dûm like a troop of marauders, followed by yelling fiends who ran with outspread toes and by all the yelping curs that are the only sewerage system Red Sea Arabs understand. Our course was through a maze of narrow, winding, human rat-runs, with no pretense at paving. Nor was the slightest effort made to avoid collision with the presumably lawful loiterers before the doors. Whoever heard or saw us coming ran for his life, taking no chances.

THERE were no windows overlooking the street. Perhaps from the superior height of camel-back Rosalie could see at times over a flat low roof and into a courtyard, but all we saw were everlasting blank walls and doors that slammed before we reached them. Even the mosque we passed was closed against us. Three men who sat cross-legged on a platform by the door of a coffee-house, stumbled inside one after the other; a moment later a swarm of dusky customers pushed their heads and rifle muzzles out into the street again, but we galloped too swiftly round a turn to offer the leisurely aim an Arab likes.

Up past the sheik's great, four-square, squat pile of buildings we galloped, passing an armed guard well enough trained to keep the hammers of the long trade muskets cocked but too scornful of woman, or else

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too surly, to salute Rosalie. She spat as she passed them, which seemed significant, for all through the East the act of spitting is the pluperfect expression of contempt. The guard took no notice of the act whatever—tall, wiry-looking, solemn men in soiled white burnooses and flowing robes, as silent as the disgusting vultures perched on a wall nearby.

The sheik's "palace" proved to be the northern limit of the town. Beyond it was a wilderness of baking, blazing sand. Around its other three sides was an almost princely generous open space, kept comparatively clear of rubbish. Facing toward that were the town's best houses, if that is a house which has no windows, and if it can be said to face at all. All the roofs were flat, and some were surrounded by a breast-high parapet. One place was stables—camel and cow and donkey by the smell. One was the "'ouse near my 'ouse" to which Rosalie was leading us.

She stayed outside on camel-back, not venturing as far as the threshold. Perhaps some stray figments of convention held her after all.

"You go in zere!" she ordered. "You stay in zere! In zere you are all olright! My papa, Sheik Abdul bin Mahmoud, is letting you alone, or I mak' for heem a grreat trouble. Food is bring you zere—all your zings arre zere—you stay zere. Bye and bye you 'ear from me again, and you gif me ze presents—yes? Goo'-by!"

She laughed and hit the camel a crack with a leather thong she had knotted on her wrist. The beast swung into a league-long trot at once, and we watched until she vanished round the palace corner, followed at full pelt by her black attendants.

"You'd think they'd stay for their pay now at least," wondered Monty.

"Don't worry—they'll come for it," said Fred. "We've a worse trouble on our hands than that!"

We did not waste words asking what he meant. The red tips of Will's ears were proof that he knew what worried us. There was no use in either blinking facts or overstating them. We had to solve a brand-new problem—Will Yerkes and a woman—our problem as much as his, and his as much as ours, with no label of instructions attached to it from either end.

We entered in silence through the high, narrow opening in the wall and dismounted in a sandy courtyard not much unlike Snoblauch's, except that it was cleaner and the curtains of the surrounding verandas were much less shabby. All our loads appeared to be piled indescriminately in the midst, with guns in their white-pine boxes on top and the dynamite underneath everything.

We unsaddled the donkeys, and they went to scratching themselves against the loads while we explored the house—a four-square series of parallelograms, each room leading into the next—fairly clean, high-ceiled, comparatively cool and gloomy as the home of mystery. Only a little light crept past the veranda curtains and the narrow, barred windows, until Monty went out and threw all the curtains up on the veranda roof.

Then we could see the furniture—every individual item of it plundered from a luckless ship. There were one or two steamer deck-chairs that might have been blown overboard in a storm and washed ashore, but the benches had been torn out bodily from wrecks, and the beds were the spring-steel bunks from sailing-ship cabins, refitted into frames made from longshore jetsam and perched on plundered wooden stanchions.

There were no bed-clothes. In Dûm it was conventional for guests to bring their own. The kitchen was hung with cooking-pots from ships' galleys, and the pitchers were enormous copper things in which stewards had collected slops and carried water to the cabins. The only table had had its legs sawed off until it stood about a foot high off the floor, and close to that was a divan taken from a high-sea smoking-room, deep enough for the friends of Allah to squat cross-legged on, and long enough for nearly a dozen of them.

Monty sat down on it, set his feet on the low table-edge and lit a cigar.

"I propose," he said, "that one of us shuts and bolts the gate. Then the rest of us sit here and smoke while Will Yerkes carries in all our loads from the courtyard and unpacks them, including the dyanmite, in this room. If that exercise is not enough to cure his infatuation, I propose he be given two pockets full of dynamite and permission to jump from the roof!"

"Second the motion!" said Fred.

"Agree to it!" said I.

"Aw!" Will jeered, throwing himself back

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next to Monty on the cushioned seat and lighting a cigaret, "you unattractive guys are jealous! It must be —— to sit back and watch a wide-awake chicken choose."

It was Monty who went out and closed the gate. Will flatly refused.

III

THERE was no use in disputing Will's claim. He held our hand now and must play it. But the lead was Rosalie's.

"Instead of questioning a girl's right to kiss whom she pleases as often as she pleases, suppose you plain-faced guys get down to considerin' what presents you'll give her? A handful o' sticks o' dynamite might make a deeper kink in her regards than trade blankets, f'r instance! Get out the inventory, somebody."

Monty produced his pocketbook and read down the long list in a voice that was sufficient comment. We had fitted out that expedition after sleepless nights and days-long arguments with a view to being prepared against any contingency likely to arise on an Arab coast. We had thought of almost everything from compass to reserve can-opener, including an Arabic-English dictionary and blue for washing clothes, but who could be blamed for not thinking of diamond necklaces for the foster-daughter of a sheik? Woman, dead or alive, black, white or snuff-colored, was the one and only thing we had all felt sure before we started that we need not make provision for meeting on this trip!

Fred suggested giving her some canned soup.

"Rot!" said Monty. "She's probably fanatically Moslem—most likely won't eat meat she didn't see killed. Besides, the soup fell overboard."

"Haven't we some chocolate?" said I, with the air of a man who has solved the problem.

"Rats!" remarked Will. "Give her chocolate, of course, but candy to a girl isn't presents; it's her birthright. What she expects to get from us is something lawless, and the costlier the better!"

"A repeating-pistol is all we've got that's likely to interest her," Fred grumbled. "Whose shall it be?" he added with an air of resignation.

"Will's, of course!" decreed Monty without hesitation. "I'll polish it and pack it in my silk scarf with some chocolate and a hundred rounds."

Monty went out into the courtyard and dug out his scarf from a steel trunk. He would take no refusal regarding the pistol.

"I'll match you," Will laughed ruefully. "Yours or mine, and the winner to pay the loser what the pistol cost!"

"Just hope your pistol is all this amusement costs you," Monty answered and presently sat polishing the metal-work with canned milk gun-oil and his handkerchief.

Then there came a thundering on the locked gate, and I climbed up on the roof to investigate. It was Villiam, using fists and heels, and his wandering eye detected me as soon as I leaned over the parapet.

"Let me in!" he shouted. "I've news for yer!"

There being nothing we wanted more than news, I went down and admitted him.

"You've yer bits o' sticks, I see," he said, glancing at the heap of luggage. "So Hi can 'ave me suit o' clothes now, can't I?"

"Depends on your news," said I, balancing, all inadvertently, the mistake I had made before in saying too much. The suit of clothes had assumed exaggerated value in his mind, and thenceforward the problem as concerned him was only to keep him down to hard facts. I led him in, and he squatted like an Arab in front of us, hesitating everlastingly between obsequious respect for Monty and extremes of self-assertion.

"Soon as you was gone," he announced, "Snoblauch tells me to saddle the donkey, an' off 'e rides fast as 'e can lick for the shriek's palace. The shriek ain't full of 'ospitality of afternoons; 'e's asnoozin' in 'is 'arem an' what not. But Snoblauch considers the time's near enough ripe to take a chance. The donkey's not fed so's 'e'll gallop, an' I'm that lean I can run like the wind. Hi gives 'im a start an' then doubles. An' I sees 'im go in through the palace gate, the guards a-givin' 'im a great argymint and 'im not listenin'."

"Have you any idea what he proposes to say to the sheik?" Monty asked.

"Any idee? Well, I should say! The old fool talks aloud to 'isself when 'e's upset, an' me wantin' that suit o' European clothes, an' you wantin' to know the news, thinks I to meself I'll listen. This is what 'e says. You've seen 'im. You've 'eard 'im. You

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know 'ow 'e be'aves. A-shakin' 'is fist at 'eaven and a-trottin' up an' down in carpet slippers. *'Donnerwetter!'* 'e says. 'A man who is to be Imperial German consul must 'ave sharp vits! It is evident these newcomers vill so act on Rosalie's mind zat no ozzer influence over her vill remain! Zey must be put a stop to! Zey must be made to convict zemselves! Zey can not be allowed to interfere!'

"The old fool's so busy a-cudgelin' of 'is wits that 'e don't know whether 'e's talkin' German, English or Arabic. Off 'e rides as soon as I've put the donkey's bridle to rights—which I weren't in any 'urry to do as long as 'e was talkin' out 'loud to 'isself. And now 'e's in the sheik's presence chamber, accusin' you gents of Gawd knows what."

"What are these plans of his that he is so anxious we should not spoil?" Monty asked.

"Ho, 'e's full o' plans, 'e is. Chiefest, 'e wants to be consul, and 'e believes if 'e can get Rosalie safe an' sure married to the sheik of Urza—who's a sort of a Bedouin settled down an' by all accounts a great believer in Germans as the comin' lords o' the earth—if 'e can only get 'er safe an' sure married to 'im so's the sheik of Urza can make out a claim to succeed this old tiger, why then 'e thinks the German Gov'ment 'll be that grateful they'll create 'im Imperial consul out of 'and! 'E's everlastingly a-gassin' to me about 'ow Germany means to cut loose an' conquer the earth. 'E kids 'isself 'e's one o' their advance agents greasin' the skids for 'em. Which it's my belief they'll skid down-'ill when they start, if 'e's the kind o' specimen they plots with! Nor they don't use 'im right neither.

"The poor old fool 'as 'is own money all locked up in a business 'ere what can't be made to pay, an' they don't contribute nothin'. 'E as a 'arem what breaks 'is 'eart as well as 'is bank-account, all for the sake o' knowin' what's bein' said be'ind the scenes. One of 'is wives is a sister to one o' the shrick's wives. Snoblauch 'ears from 'er what's goin' on, an' it fair drives 'im crazy! Now, about that suit o' clothes, sir?"

BEFORE Monty could reply to that there came another prodigious hammering at the gate, and Villiam leaped to his feet as if a whip had cracked.

"That's 'er!" he announced with a grimace. "If she catches me 'ere, she'll charge me wi' tellin' tales! Hi'm an orphan, Hi am!"

He did not wait on ceremony but ran like a shadow from the room, swarmed up a post to the roof, vaulted the parapet and dropped to earth outside the wall without as much as "by-your-leave" or hesitation. And in proof of the accuracy of his judgment Rosalie's voice began to make itself heard in extremely unladylike objurgations above the thunder of blows on wood and the shouts of her followers. With a laugh at our looks of concern Will made haste to admit her.

She came in with the eunuch in attendance and half a dozen servants bearing hot food. Another dozen ruffians stayed outside to gape at our belongings. In her own hands she carried chin-high a great dish of steaming curry—"like John the Baptist carrying Salome's head," as Fred remarked, too excited to care which was martyr and which miscreant.

"See!" she said, laughing like a child at a party, "I am gifing presents first. Now you shall eat. Zen you shall gif me your presents!"

Ordering the dishes spread on the low table, and us on to our heels in front of them, she flung herself on the long seat with a squeal of delight and yelled with laughter when Fred burned himself. With a mouthful of something hotter than the hinge of Tophet he had either to swallow or spit, tried both at once and exploded. When she had recovered her breath, she assured us the heat was wholly due to excellence.

"Nothing has been poison! Everyzing I 'ave tasted first! See—look!"

With a spring she was beside Monty—snatched a liberal handful of the hot stuff from the dish in front of him—stuffed it into her own mouth and was gone again with the springs of the long seat dancing under her.

"All very good food—much better than my papa, Sheik Abdul bin Mahmoud, is eating!"

There were no knives, spoons or forks, and we had not unpacked our own. The only way was to roll up balls of rice in our fingers and mop up the meat and gravy, and it takes the civilized man longer to learn the methods of his tribal ancestors than the barbarian needs to acquire the tricks of Mayfair and Tooting Beck. We made a most unholy mess of faces, fingers

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and table-cloth and had to take little less than a bath in the basin the eunuch brought to each of us afterward in turn, amid the jeers of Rosalie.

Then she summoned Will to sit beside her and what with kissing and hugging him was too busy for a while to remember what else she had come for. She did not in the least mind our witnessing the love-affair and was vastly amused at our embarrassment.

Suddenly, however, she did remember and cut short a kiss in the middle.

"My presents—ze presents for me!" she shouted, clapping her hands. "Vhere arrre zey?"

So Monty produced the pistol and chocolates wrapped in the silk scarf with the best grace he could assume, and for a moment she was so disappointed that I thought she would hit him or break into tears. She pouted, and her eyes flashed. But Will called her "sweetheart" again, and she permitted him to show her how the pistol worked and to peel the tin-foil from a cake of chocolate.

Then for a while, munching with dark brown smears on either corner of her mouth, she was fascinated while Will loaded and unloaded the pistol before her eyes, explaining its mechanism. At last, when he had loaded it for about the fiftieth time, she snatched it from him suddenly, jerked at the trigger and put three shots in succession through the table, smashing a dish that had survived both storm and shipwreck before we ate from it.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she shouted. "It ees *good!* Yes, it ees good! My papa, Abdul bin Mahmoud, has not such a pistol! I vill use it to shoot Villiam tonight! He vas in here just now vizout my perrmission! Tonight 'e vill come to sing under my vindow, and I vill shoot 'im!"

She fired two or three more shots, sending the eunuch and the rest of them scattering for cover, and then demanded that Will reload the new toy, which he did. Monty made faces to prevent him, but he was too busy to see, and a man can't be expected to do much cool thinking with the chocolate from such a damsel's otherwise red lips smeared all over his own. Fred went near and kicked him savagely, but Rosalie saw that and misinterpreted.

"Oh! Oh! You arre jealous! Zey arre all jealous! Zat is why zey look unhappy vhen you and I embrace. Oh, *mon angel. Mon beau, brave homme*—I dare not leave you 'ere viz zese jealous people any longer. You must come with me to my 'ouse!"

It was at the point that Will finally glimpsed through the mist of his infatuation that all was not going perhaps exactly according to Hoyle. But by that time the pistol was loaded, and she had it again.

"—— young fool!" swore Monty between set teeth, and Rosalie heard that.

She misinterpreted again.

"Who is —— fool?" she demanded. "Me? I? Me? I vill show you!"

Will made a belated move to join us, but she said something below her breath very swiftly in the local patois to the eunuch, and he repeated it louder and yet more swiftly. In an instant every one of the servants had closed on Will, and she stood between them and us, with the pistol pointed at us and a look on her beautiful face that betrayed ungovernable passion and unbridled will.

We had pistols, although she may not have known it, and, whatever her delusions on the subject, it would have been ridiculous to suppose ourselves unable to rescue Will. But, on the other hand, to shoot one's hostess and her servants in her own house on any pretext less than sheer necessity was a proposition to give the coolest adventurer pause. And to add to our confusion Will begged us to let things take their course.

"If you interfere with her," he warned, "you'll have the whole tribe down on the lot of us!"

I ran to the outer gate and bolted it. Guessing what I had done, Rosalie came hurrying out at the head of her contingent with Will held firmly in their midst. Fred and Monty followed them, and in the long shadow by the gate we had another altercation.

"You open!" ordered Rosalie.

NOT daring to draw my own weapon for fear lest the sight of it should start her off shooting at random, I stood still with my back to the gate doing my best to look calm and confident. Monty and Fred proceeded to create a diversion from the rear in hope of something turning up, and Rosalie turned on them in towering fury, abusing them in Arabic, French and English simultaneously, mixing similies, metaphors and tongues

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into one hot-breathed babel of vituperation.

Under cover of that I managed to get word with Will.

"Make a dash for it!" I advised. "If we four once get back to back together, they'll not be able to get us apart again. Break back toward Fred and Monty suddenly!"

But he had not yet quite conquered the fascination of the unknown adventure in store. He had realized how serious we considered the predicament and was willing to concede our right to call the game, but he still believed soft words and caresses could turn the trick.

"Aw, what's the use?" he answered. "Suppose she makes me prisoner for a while—why, it's a joke! As long as she's partial to me she won't hurt me, will she? And she won't care to get my goat by making trouble for you three. Open the door. I'll take the chance."

At about that moment Fred said something or other in Arabic to which the eunuch took exception. The black ruffian promptly drew a knife and aimed for him, only to drop it with a roar as Monty struck his wrist a terrific blow from his pistol-butt. Rosalie backed up her own man by aiming pointblank at Monty, but I made a spring and knocked up her hand from behind in the nick of time. Then I pinned both her arms to her sides, she yelling as if I were killing her, and a free-for-all fight began that was about the briskest I ever took part in.

Fred got the pistol away from Rosalie while I held her, but that was only the beginning of things. She broke free from me with the strength of a wildcat and went after Fred and the pistol. Will took the cue to make a fight for liberty and went down under a tangle of legs and arms. Once they had him down, it took but three of them to hold him so that when I closed in to kick them off him they easily spared two of their number to tackle me, and the remainder, including the eunuch, followed Rosalie in her assault on Monty and Fred.

Having all the firearms once more in our possession, there would have been no sense in not making at least a bluff with them. Monty leveled a pistol at the eunuch's head. Fred followed suit with his two, pointed straight at Rosalie. I broke loose from my two assailants and held them at bay with the fourth.

"Tell your men to let our friend get up!" Fred ordered, as Rosalie backed away.

"Call your men off our man on the ground!" Monty growled at the eunuch, who had both hands up.

"Make another kick for it, Will!" I shouted, and the convulsions of the heap of men on top of him proved that he had heard. I got near enough to kick one or two of his captors off him, and he had risen to his knees, when there came a new sound of thundering on the gate and every one, Rosalie included, stopped in midact.

There were shouts as well as the din of rifle-butts on the stout wood. The words were all Arabic—the voices arrogant—and the number of men by the sound was a score or more. Rosalie began to laugh. Will made a last effort and broke free.

"Slip me that gun!" he said, taking his stand between Monty and Fred.

Rosalie began answering the men outside, mocking them and evidently calling their courage in question.

"Back to the veranda!" ordered Monty. "Come on, now, all four together!"

But we did not execute that maneuver. Rosalie laughed louder than ever and made a signal toward the roof. We all looked up and saw that Arabs had swarmed the wall on three sides and were covering us with firearms. I pocketed my own weapon quickly, being minded to have it to use on some occasion when the drop should be mine and not the other men's. Rosalie began laughing and talking at top speed, the men on the roof answering never a word but betraying plenty of interest, and the eunuch unbolted the gate.

It was thrown wide instantly by pressure from without, and a dozen men rushed through the opening. But Rosalie was quicker than they were and gave less explanation. She went like a flash through the gate with a hop, skip and jump and was gone! The men on the roof came down close to the edge and covered us at close range then. To have fired a shot would have been simple suicide.

It was now I who stood alone, cut off from Monty and Fred and Will by a distance of a dozen paces and as many armed men. The eunuch was too busy talking sixteen to the dozen, telling the newcomers what hellions we were and how brave he himself, to pay any attention to what was happening. A man on the roof gave a

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sudden, sharp order and followed it with a string of brimstone Arabic by way of emphasis. All Rosalie's men, eunuch included, promptly took to their heels, leaving the recent arrivals to attend to business.

It was scarcely surprizing under the circumstances that they should mistake their man and pounce on me instead of Will. Their speed and determination did them credit. With a whirl that took me off my feet breathless, they swept through the gate and slammed it behind them, while the men on the roof covered my friends. I shivered, expecting to hear shots by way of protest and reprisal and then, being human, and a prisoner and helpless for the moment, grew indignant because neither Monty nor Fred nor Will was fool enough to ruin the chances of all of us in the heat of the moment.

At least fifty men were taking part in the capture. Some remained on the roof. A dozen stayed outside the gate to prevent pursuit, and a dozen more dragged me across the open ground toward the sheik's palace. Evidently there were strict orders not to harm any of us, for, when Monty climbed to the roof and shouted after me, the roof-guard only pointed rifles at his head and did not molest him.

"You know what our resources are!" he shouted. "We won't let the night go by without an attempt at rescue!"

I saw him turn his back and leave the roof and ran on between my captors wondering what in the world he meant by resources. I knew as well as he did what was in our luggage, but, even supposing he and Fred and Will should be clever enough to save that from being plundered, our little arsenal would be a flea-bite in that armed land. More than a dozen times I had experienced Monty's resourcefulness and ingenuity in what had seemed impossibly tight places, but what he could do to solve this problem seemed likely to prove even beyond his power to guess.

And that question, being remoter of the two, was dwarfed into insignificance beside the mystery of what would happen when Rosalie should discover they had captured the wrong man—and what steps that fiery young woman would take to remedy the error!

As they hurried me along the palace wall in the long, purple shadow of late afternoon, I looked up and saw what must be Rosalie's quarters. Near the top of a tower at one end of the palace was the only window in Dûm that faced outward. Beneath that no doubt Villiam sang songs that so enraged the "shriek," and there she had coolly proposed to murder him tonight if only we had not deprived her of the pistol! There was white stuff fluttering behind it—doubtless the sleeve or handkerchief of Rosalie herself, on watch.

IV

THE interior design of that palace was after the fashion of Hampton Court maze, cross-bred with a mole-hill and a rat-run. It was nearly dark when my captors went through the form of satisfying the men on guard at the main gate that they were not strangers sprung out of the earth or from the sky.

As they let us pass, a *muezzin* began to announce the hour of evening prayer, his clear voice rising and falling more musically than a bell. The sun in those parts seems always to perform the last few leagues of his day's journey in a special hurry; he plunged under the sky-line just as the heavy gate clanged behind us, and, Dûm being one of those feckless places not yet blessed by Mr. Edison—there was not even a brass-lunged phonograph in all the town—we marched forward into darkness that my eyes could not penetrate, although my captors seemed to know the way by ear and sense of touch.

We advanced and turned to right and left, swung around corners apparently leading back toward the main gate—turned again sharply and mounted half a dozen steps, on which I stumbled and barked my shins—passed through three doors and under a curtain of heavy, dusty cloth, before we came to a square antechamber where an old tin kerosene lantern burned dimly on a stool. A man with the longest rifle I ever saw stood guard beside it.

My captors spoke with him in cautious undertones, I for comfort's sake feeling all the while at the pistol under my jacket. There was nothing suggestive of ritual about the interchange of words; it sounded more like small-talk. But after a minute or two the man on guard saw fit to slap the door noisily three or four times with the flat of his open palm. Then he flung it open suddenly, and my captors thrust me through.

They remained outside. The door

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slammed behind me, and I stood and blinked at six oil lamps with colored glass lenses—very pretty and impressive. There was a carpet on the floor, perhaps twenty feet by thirty, and as likely as not priceless, but I was in no mood at that minute to appraise what Will calls "dry-goods."

I faced a divan, cushioned with bright colors and long enough to seat a dozen men, although only one man was on it—a gray-bearded, hook-nosed ancient in snowy white linen, smoking a water-pipe through a very long silver mouthpiece. Below him on the floor Snoblauch squatted, noticeably ill-at-ease, and facing Snoblauch sat two other men, both apparently Arabs. They smoked cigarets through amber tubes, and the air of the place was filled with layer on layer of blue aromatic smoke. Through the dim light I could not see any of the walls except the one I faced, but I was aware of movement to my left and suspected a screen that concealed women.

The old man on the divan stared at me like an owl without blinking but said nothing, continuing to puff at his water-pipe at arithmetically even intervals. Suddenly one of the two Arabs who faced Snoblauch spoke in almost perfect English, and the surprize nearly scared me out of my wits.

"Make obeisance to Abdul bin Mahmoud, the Excellent, the Servant of the Most High, the Wrath and the Flail of Allah, the Lord of the Limits of Decency, the Sheik of Dûm!"

I made a gesture with my right hand indicative of admission that I stood with dusty shoes on an Arab's carpet—a mere mannerly salute.

"Make obeisance!" boomed the voice again.

I bowed, as stiffly as a man can who has race, color and creed in mind as well as other good ground for resentment.

"Lay your forehead on the carpet!" the voice commanded, but I stiffened and stood still.

"Goodness gracious, *mein Herr!*" Snoblauch protested in his high-pitched, worried way. "Why not do as he tells you? I always make obeisance. Why anger him merely for the sake of jingoismus?"

I did not answer Snoblauch.

At last the sheik spoke, grumbling and mumbling into his gray beard but not moving a fraction of an inch one way or the other. Only his hand that held the pipe-stem rose toward his mouth at the everlasting measured intervals. The man with the booming voice interpreted.

"Who are you who come apparently from nowhere, for no reason, and behave scandalously with one who is the greatest gem of all the sheik's gems?"

It would not have been good Arab manners to name even such a veil-despising young lady as Rosalie in front of me, a foreigner, a prisoner.

Remembering Monty's words that had made such effect on the eunuch I answered at once.

"I am a distinguished visitor, expecting distinguished treatment. Is this your Arabian manner of treating strangers?"

"For God's sake, *mein Herr*," cut in Snoblauch, "do not say anything to aggravate him!"

"On what steamer did you come?" was the next question, and in answer I reeled off the ship's name and her captain's, as well as the owners' names and place of business, the tonnage, nature of cargo, port of departure and destination.

To my surprize the information was received with deep interest and translated word for word to the sheik, he nodding after each item.

There followed twenty or more searching questions, directed chiefly to fix the responsibility for the ship's remaining outside the reef. Presumption of guilt apparently rested on me, and the crime appeared to be very serious, judged by local standards. At last the sheik said something that the other man translated to me—not a question this time but a statement of fact so couched as to amount to condemnation.

"Had the ship taken on board one of our pilots and come through the opening in the reef, all that good cargo and all the ship's fittings would have been divided already!"

THERE was a rustle in the darkness to my left hand in proof that the judgment had been heard by others—and no doubt considered just. The sheik spoke again, the interpreter letting his cigaret burn away to gray ash untasted.

"This man—" the interpreter nodded in the direction of Snoblauch, who began to look uneasier than ever and to try to look extremely confident—"says you and the three other men have come purposing treachery. There is marriage contemplated

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between the Sheik of Urza and one whom this great sheik holds in honor. This man says you four men come seeking to prevent this marriage. Why?"

"We came," I answered, "bearing presents for the Sheik of Dûm and seeking permission to explore in his neighborhood for ancient stones and buildings. We have been prevented from offering the presents, first by this man, Snoblauch, whose men by his orders carried off our belongings when we landed on the beach, and secondly by another person whose name is held in honor by the sheik."

"Where are the presents?" came the almost instant answer.

"They are like the old stones and the ruins of ancient buildings," said I. "They are not things to be withheld from unoffending people."

"You shall give the presents tomorrow," was the prompt answer. "What would you do with ancient stones and ruins of buildings? He who carries off old stones has sweat for his reward, but how much else? What profit is there for any man in the ruins of buildings?"

I thought of the vanity that induced this Red Sea wrecker-sheik to call himself "Lord of the Limits of Decency" and decided to tell just as much of the truth as would flatter him:

"We have heard," said I, "that the servants of the great King Solomon came formerly to Dûm. We came to find proofs of that; to find traces of the buildings that the servants of Solomon erected; to prove, if that is possible, that the great Sheik Abdul bin Mahmoud, Wrath and Flail of Allah, Lord of the Limits of Decency and Sheik of Dûm, is the direct descendant of King Solomon or, if not that, then at least the descendant of the chief among Solomon's servants."

There was a long pause when that had been translated. The sheik sat puffing at the silver mouthpiece no faster and no more emphatically, not blinking his eyes any oftener or moving anything except his right hand. Yet it was perfectly clear that he was thinking furiously and that neither the interpreter nor the other Arab nor Snoblauch knew any better than I what form his answer would take. When it came after several minutes, it was entirely surprizing and logical after the fashion of the East that sidesteps nothing except essential facts.

"You are a very great liar! If your story were true and you really came here to discover whether this sheik is not the descendant of the great King Solomon, then you would have been so full of respect and worship for this sheik that you would have touched the floor with your forehead on entering this room!"

Floored for the moment by the unexpectedness of that assertion I stood silent.

"You are condemned by your lack of words!" said the sheik.

Compelled to make some sort of defense, I took refuge in the sheik's own trenches.

"It is not the fashion among the men of my land," I said, "to make obeisance to sheiks whose lineage is not yet proven, for, if we did make too ready obeisance, then those sheiks whose ancestry was proven might say that our salute was worthless, being given at random to men of no birth or merit!"

It was the sheik's turn to reflect again, this time for several minutes. He made the interpreter repeat my argument at the end of that time and reflected once more. Finally he postponed his verdict but contrived to leave me with food for grim reflection on my own account.

"Tomorrow you shall give the gifts. There is a man condemned to be flayed alive in the sun with salt water thrown on him at intervals. After receiving the presents, Abdul bin Mahmoud, the Merciful, the Servant of the Most High, the Wrath and the Flail of Allah, the Lord of the Limits of Decency, the Sheik of Dûm, will decide whether you shall be flayed alive likewise or given leave to search for old stones!"

There was a ship's bridge-bell—a beautifully modeled thing of engraved brass—suspended from a metal bracket on the wall by the sheik's shoulder. He rang it sharply by the leather thong made fast to the end of the tongue, and I heard a door open in the darkness to my right.

After a pause during which the sheik neither spoke nor moved but Snoblauch stared into the darkness fascinated and I endured the sensation of being studied thoroughly by men whom I could not see, four very tall Arabs, whose wrist sinews were like violin strings, emerged out of the gloom and made me prisoner anew, one to the left, one to the right, one behind to drive me forward and the fourth in front of me lest I go too fast.

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The man behind growled in my ear, so close that his whisker tickled me. We started forward in step in quick time, I discovering too late that the floor on which I had stood was but a platform and falling a matter of two feet on to a lower floor, throwing my guard into disorder—an offense for which they cuffed me mercilessly.

Reaching a door in the wall we changed formation to what the navy calls "single line ahead," two of them in front in single file and two behind me. A boy seated on the floor by the door pulled a string and made it slide in grooves, disclosing a parallelogram of utter blackness out of which a warm smell emerged. He was a peculiar-looking boy, as naked as Truth is usually said to be, except for an enormous turban, and he gave me a look as I passed that made me shudder more than all the "shriek's" cross-examination.

THE smile that was merely grimace, the eyes full of interest that was not curiosity, the matter-of-fact way of sitting and pulling at the thong, seemed to suggest that he had seen a hundred men go that way and well knew what fate befell them. He did not speak. He made no sign of recognition. The door closed behind us with the same uncanny calm with which he opened it, and the man in front of me reached back to drag me to the left. It was more than a minute before I realized that the two men behind me had remained on the other side of the door.

I began to hang back then, remembering that I had a pistol and going over in mind with the speed of a drowning man the chances of hiding it somewhere before I should be searched, or of using it to advantage before I could be secured for the night behind lock and key. And while I conjectured, groping along a pitch-dark narrow passage after my captors, warm arms were suddenly thrown around my neck, and warm lips kissed mine until my breath was lost.

Rosalie did not know yet that they had taken the wrong man, and neither darkness nor I disillusioned her!

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" she whispered. "Oh! *Mon ange! Mon beau, brave homme!*"

But she was not content with whispering. One hand left my neck and sought so swiftly among my pockets that mine could not follow fast enough to catch and hold it, and on tiptoe with lips to mine she found the precious pistol. She let go of me and made off with it then with a speed suggestive, perhaps, that kissing my face would have been pleasanter had I shaved more recently.

"*Mon dieu!*" she called back from behind the cover of blind darkness. "*Sois heureux maintenant*—zey would 'ave taken eet! *Moi*—I can use eet to bettaire purpose! First I shoot Villiam! Zen I shoot zose three ozzer men who no like me! Zen I marry you, an' ve togezzer make my papa be'ave! *Au revoir!*"

Strange that she should have balked at shooting the sheik as well! Perhaps she was considering the number of cartridges the pistol held and with the practical spirit of her sex confining her calculations for the present to what she possessed the means to undertake—hereditary Gallic thrift asserting itself even amid those surroundings!

Suddenly the two guards either realized that I had fallen too far behind or else were aware that Rosalie had done her will, for they came pouncing back on me and shook me like a rat, now shoving me along in front of them, their iron fingers driving into my flesh like clamps, and I too disappointed from loss of the pistol to make more than a half-hearted effort to break loose.

The passage seemed endless as well as utterly devoid of light. There was scarcely room in it for the three of us to go abreast with their bare elbows rubbing along the sun-dried brick walls. Without being able to see them, I was aware of the beams within a foot of my head, and the earthen floor was so full of pitfalls that but for the men who hustled me along I should have fallen twenty times.

We reached a corner at last, however, around which a dim light penetrated, and turned at a right-angle into the dazzling glare of a common ship's tin hurricane-lantern, hung on an iron spike in the wall opposite a door with a grating in its upper half.

Under the lantern they two now started to search me, but I had had about enough of that for one night and put up a stiffer fight than they bargained for. They tore my clothes to rags but got nothing for their pains except a bloody nose apiece and crushed feet—for I had boots on, and they nothing but sandals.

However, their strength was that of

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leopards, and finally they hurled me through the door into darkness and locked it on the outside. Then for revenge one of them went and fetched a jar of water, lifted it for me to look at through the bars, invited me to drink and lovingly poured it all out on the dry floor, holding the jar high enough for me to see the lamplight shining through the stream.

When that was done, he smashed the earthen jar as a sort of extra suggestion of drought, blew the lantern out and called his friend away. In darkness that felt like the night before the universe was made I heard their retreating footfalls punctuating ghoulish laughter, until at last even the echoes of that ceased and all was still.

I began to remember then what the French captain had said about insects. First in dozens, then in squadrons, then in myriads they began to crawl on me, and, although not all of them appeared possessed of teeth and claws, there were several special sorts that made up for the others' deficiency—and those that did not bite compensated for that by being much more restless.

After scratching until I realized that it only spurred the vermin to greater effort, I began to explore my prison, feeling the way cautiously around the walls. It was nearly four-square, and after making the circuit three times I guessed the dimensions at thirty feet by twenty-five. The walls, except in one place, were apparently of coral rock, and overhead I could just touch stout beams with the tips of my fingers when I stood on tiptoe.

That much ascertained, I made an inventory and found that I had a pocket-knife, a few coins, a very good gold watch, whose ticking sounded in that silent waste of darkness like the reassuring counsel of a friend, some matches in a safety match-box and a pocket note-book containing more than a hundred leaves. Everything else had been snatched or spilled from my pockets in the effort to search me.

I discovered there were only nine matches and did not dare strike one for the present. I sat for a while with my back against the rock wall, because in that position I could crush a great number of insects without too great effort, and while in that position thoughts began to haunt me of Villiam going to sing songs under Rosalie's window and being shot down without warning. I wondered why I should feel so anxious on that ruffian's account.

Then of my three friends being attacked from the roof at night—vivid mental pictures of Rosalie's walking up to each one with my pistol and blowing his brains out while Arabs held him. Then arrived visions of what would be likely to happen to me when the lady should discover the wrong man was under arrest. I thought of the threatened death by flaying and wondered whether that could after all be much worse than the present ordeal by insects.

IT WAS the thought that Rosalie would almost certainly not choose to leave the man she considered her lover in such an infernal predicament for longer than she could help that finally set me to doing something instead of wasting time. Of all the disagreeable probabilities my frightened brain could conjure up, the least acceptable was to be rescued by Rosalie and discovered as my own true self, not Will. I had about as much confidence in that young lady's fund of forgiveness as in the mercy of the insects.

So I made a lot of spills out of sheets torn from my note-books and sacrificed a match. By burning both match and spills to the very last fraction, and my fingers incidentally, I made a complete survey of the cell, and before my eyes had grown accustomed to the dark again I was at work furiously with the pocket-knife on a part of one wall made of big, flat, sun-dried bricks that looked as if it had been breached by somebody else at some time or other, rather carelessly filled up and forgotten.

The bricks, what with the pressure on top of them and the dryness, had grown almost as hard as the coral, but not quite, and I was spurred to greater violence by the sight I had had of the insects swarming over me. I broke one blade of the knife but had better luck with the other, and after what seemed like an hour's digging I could get my arm almost up to the shoulder into the hole I had made.

Then I struck another match, looked at my watch, examined the hole and continued—beginning to suffer by that time from thirst as well as weariness and bleeding hands. I worked until my head swam and then had to lie still, panting, for what seemed a week; then I sacrificed a third match, looked at my watch again and

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discovered that only fifteen minutes had passed since I looked at it last.

That brought me to my senses. I took command of myself again and began to work steadily and systematically. At the end of about another half hour my effort was rewarded by feeling my fist break through on the far side of a wall that was more than four feet thick. I did not dare strike a light then but lay listening, and hearing nothing I began to enlarge the hole until I could crawl through it.

Once I made the attempt too soon and so nearly stuck half-way that deadly terror seized me and I rubbed all the skin from my elbows and knees in the belief that the weight of the wall above was crushing me. But I had the hole big enough at last and struggled through into a fresher-smelling, perfectly dark passage.

After lying still for a long time, I heard distinctly the noise a sleeping camel makes when he disapproves of his dreams. Nobody could hear that sound once and ever again mistake it. Crouching and crawling on hands and knees for what seemed an interminable time, I turned a corner and rammed my head into a wooden door, part of one of whose lower panels was missing. I could see the stars through that when I got my face near enough to the floor. I had reached the sheik's private camel stable, and at once the thought that servants might be sleeping in among the brutes sent new cold chills all through me.

However, there was nothing else for it. The door was locked, and the framework solid. Like almost every other fitting I had noticed in the whole town, this, too, was a relic of some shipwreck, and the panels had never been designed to let full-grown men go through them. I must have made enough noise while forcing my too solid body through that needle's eye to have awakened ordinary sleepers fifty feet away. And yet, when I struggled through at last and walked away over dust-dry camel dung, I all but set my booted foot on the face of a sleeping black man! The camels, some standing, some lying, all saw me but did not take alarm. Five or six attendants lay on the ground among them, snoring, all of them naked except for the thin trade blankets that the East has come to think as necessary to its skin, and that gave me an idea.

I stripped off my own verminous clothing, left it for whoever cared to associate with its countless new inhabitants, tore off a corner of the shirt and did up my valuables in that and proceeded on my way stark naked, trusting to the night to make my whiteness look like blackness and to soften down the awkward gait of the white man unaccustomed to bare feet.

In a corner was a tank at which the camels drank. I got into it and washed off the last of the insects, drinking, too, sparsely and with vast repugnance. The walls on three sides were but partitions of sun-dried brick separating the camel quarters from some other divisions of the palace. Close by the outer wall lay a camel asleep, not tied. And near to the tank in which I bathed lay a bundle of old heel-ropes, mostly rotten.

I knotted the ropes together into one long one and, all glistening wet in the starlight, got on to the sleeping camel's back and waked him with heels and rope, not hitting him hard enough to hurt but trying to rouse him gently. The brute let out a yell as if I had murdered him, and, jumping up in a panic, began to run about the yard, frightening the other tied beasts and so nearly treading on the man I had almost stepped on myself a few minutes before that for a moment I thought he had done it. But camels are forever having nightmare, and it needed more than one stampeding creature to disturb Arabia's calm.

The man awoke and swore lustily in vile Arabic for about a minute. Another man not far from him sat up and joined in the hallelujah chorus. Hearing their voices, the camels decided there was nothing to be afraid of after all and settled down to finish their night's sleep. My own chosen mount went back grumbling to his favorite place and proceeded to try to get rid of me by scratching me off against the wall.

I would have asked him nothing better, except perhaps a little less haste. Trying to get his teeth round to bite my knee, he put his head through the noose I had made for him. I pulled it nearly taut enough to throttle, lest he slip it off too easily, then stood up on him and jumped for the top of the high wall, just reaching it.

AFTER that I was over the top in less than a second and lowering myself knot by knot on the far side. I had just begun to congratulate myself on safety for the present and to speculate on

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whether it would be safest to try to join my friends at once or to wait until daylight, when a voice from below me challenged in gruff Arabic.

I looked down and saw a man in burnoos and flowing white garments, armed with a long gun, about fifteen feet below me and exactly underneath. Wondering what to do and whether he would shoot, I checked my downward course, and the camel chose that moment either to chew through the rope or to break its rotten strands by struggling. At any rate, the rope broke, and I fell, crupper first, on the face of the man below.

Whether or not I broke his neck I never ascertained. I am not even sure that the accident killed him. But he lay like a log, and I lay beside him for about ten minutes, watching to see whether anybody else would come on sentry-go below the wall. When I had made up my mind at last that this man was not a sentry after all but a mere curious individual promenading by night on lawless errands of his own, the moon rose over the walls across the open square and bathed everything in silver light.

That made further drastic action of some sort imperative. A white man walking naked under the full moon would have aroused the active curiosity of folk less easy to pique than Arabs.

I am told that since the great war ran its course the mere putting on of dead men's garments has become an ordinary act to men obliged to do it. That may be; war is the father and mother of calloused feeling. But that was my maiden effort at anything of that kind, and, whether that Arab was really dead or not, the pulling on one after another of his none too sweetly smelling clothes made my flesh creep more than the insects had done.

I left his naked body there at last and started across the open ground with the best attempt I could make at Arab stateliness, cursing the sandals that slipped back and forward and the moon that was putting forth a very passable imitation of sunlight. Nothing was more certain now than that I was actually being seen by keen eyes from the palace roof and towers. Yet I could not for the life of me remember how an Arab carries his rifle when not on the war-path, or whether in stooping to adjust the clumsy sandals I ought to bend my back, one knee, both knees or every joint in my body. It is little details of that kind that take on greater importance than ammunition in tight places, for by them a man is saved or damned.

I soon had proof that the palace guard was wide awake. A rifle barked on the parapet, and a bullet whistled close enough to my ear to fill me with profound respect for the fellow's shooting. That propounded another problem in local etiquette. How was I to know whether a local gentleman returning, say, from paying court to the wife of an absentee would or would not return the compliment by wasting a cartridge on the roof-guard? It well might be that the shot was intended as mere pleasantry—a sort of "Ah, you gay dog, I see you!" prophetic of verbal chaff to follow in the coffee-house next day.

I solved the problem by facing about shaking my rifle in the general direction of the roof and not answering the shrill shout that greeted the pleasantry. What the shout meant I could not guess, but what the incident meant was this, that, if I hoped to gain access to my friends without the whole sheik's palace full of rascals knowing it, then I must invade the "'ouse near my 'ouse" from the flank or rear.

I half expected to see guards posted like sleepy vultures along the roof, but apparently there was none. Whether or not they were sleeping in the rooms below or posted in the courtyard, it would have been much too risky for me to do any shouting or hammering on the door to wake my friends. Yet to try to climb the wall would have scarcely commended me to any one on watch, and, supposing the guards were gone away, as of course might be the case, Monty or Fred or Will would have been perfectly justified in firing on a man in Arab garments crawling over the wall. I could easily imagine any one of them doing it and making better shooting than the Arab on the palace did.

The fact remained, though, that that afternoon the sheik's men had swarmed up our wall from the outside with no delay or difficulty. That sort of feat, of course, is very much easier to numbers of men than to one, but recollection of it set me to feeling along the wall, my side of it being, of course, in shadow. When I had turned the corner and entered the little passageway between our high wall and the next, I found holes where the sun-dried bricks had been pulled

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out to give purchase for fingers and toes.

Everything became easy then except climbing with a long, heavy rifle in my hands, but by using the rifle as a prop against the opposite wall I managed it at last and lay on the top full-length, looking and listening.

Half of our courtyard was in light, half of it in shadow. The donkeys lay sleeping close to their saddles. Our luggage, apparently almost untouched, still lay piled in a great heap. There were no lights in the windows—no guards that I could see—no sound of snoring and nothing whatever to suggest that anything was wrong or anybody not at ease. I dropped down on to the roof, crept to the edge and lay still again. I could neither hear a sound nor see any living being, except the donkeys. So I slipped down one of the rounded posts and looked about me. All was still.

I walked to the door of the apartments and struck it with my rifle-butt—then again—then louder—then as loudly as I dared. There came no answer. I pulled at the latch-string, and the door swung open by its own weight. There was no light within, nor any sound of breathing. I went in and struck one of my scanty supply of matches, nearly jumping out of my skin at sight of my own gaunt shadow on the wall. There was nobody in the room where we had received Villiam and Rosalie.

I found a lantern and lit it—then began a search of the whole house, trembling in anticipation of finding my friends' dead bodies lying somewhere. But I found neither trace of them nor sign of fighting. There was no disorder; nothing was overturned; the plates they had eaten from that evening lay on the table unwashed, and the pots they had cooked a simple meal in were still warm on the kitchen hearthstones, but of Monty or Fred or Will there was no more trace than if the sands of Dûm had opened up and swallowed them. I went out to the gate and tried it. It was bolted on the inside!

V

THAT was a night of very strange adventure. The first thing I did was to bathe again, using the crocks of water Rosalie had ordered stacked in the rack outside the kitchen. Then I hunted by moonlight for Christian clothes among the luggage and put them on with a feeling of having changed my luck as well as my appearance.

I had scarcely done that when a knock came on the gate, stealthy and several times repeated. Pretending not to notice it, I hurried to open a white pine case and take out my rifle. I had opened an ammunition-box, too, and filled my pockets with cartridges when a figure I thought I recognized came over the wall by the route I had taken and dropped on the roof on all fours.

"For Gawd's sake, don't shoot!" he whispered raucously.

A moment later Villiam came spinning down a veranda-pole and begged me with almost tears in his voice to admit him into the house, where none could see us.

"Where are my friends?" I demanded.

"I'll tell," he said. "Let me in!"

He elbowed past me and threw himself on to the long divan with an air of unaccustomed luxury.

"Your friends is in 'ookey!" he told me with a grin. "Got any smokes? Got anything better than water to drink?"

I gave him a cigar.

"Mr. Monty told me as 'ow you 'ad some whisky," he announced.

"Either he lied, or else you do," I answered.

There certainly was whisky—Monty always carried some, but that was neither time nor place for a spree, any more than he was the man to drink with.

"Sure," he said. "I'm a liar! Hi thought maybe as 'ow I'd get a drink, that's all!"

"Where are my friends?" I demanded again.

"In the palace," he answered, "along o' Rosie! It's known you've escaped. They sent me with a message."

"What message?"

"As 'ow you're to bring the presents for the shriek as soon after dawn as you can sort 'em out and carry 'em over!"

I tapped the rifle that I held across my lap.

"You don't get out of here," I said, "until you've told me the truth! You had better begin, hadn't you?"

"I'm tellin' yer the Gawd's truth! You 'adn't been gone out of 'ere much more than a hour afore your friends decided they'd go and get yer or never come back

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no more, amen! Them's friends, that kind is. They 'as a powwow first as to whether one of 'em shan't stay an' keep an eye on the guards what the shriek's men left be'ind, but finally they makes it up all to go together, and sure enough, soon as they starts—the guard ups and follows 'em.

"They takes the sole military precaution o' boltin' the gate from the inside and departin' by way o' the wall. Rosalie 'as given stric' orders long ago as 'ow the luggage ain't to be touched on no account, not even if the shriek says different, but they couldn't know that. They kisses 'emselves good-by to it, takin' nothing with 'em except Fred's concertina. They laughed at 'im, but 'e wouldn't leave that."

"Wait," I said. "How do you find out all this?"

"Easy as spittin'. You seen me make my 'asty adieus when Rosalie showed up? All I did was duck be'ind the wall and wait there. Soon as she an' the shriek's men 'ad slung their 'ooks, taking you along with 'em, I pops back over the wall an' lies doggo, watching for whisky an' listenin' for tips. When they ups and 'ops it, I stays be'ind. I was that thirsty—same as I am now—that I'd 'ave found the whisky, on'y for coming oversentimental an' letting my feelin's 'ave the better o' my judgment. Hi ups and 'ops after 'em, and, when they reaches the palace gate, I'm along."

"You mean you went into the palace with them?"

"Not so 'asty! Not so 'asty! There was a guard outside the palace, most of twenty strong, some of 'em the same what 'ad put up the scrap and collared you, and they 'ad stric' orders not to admit nobody. But say, that feller named Monty is a hot 'un and no kid! 'E walks about twenty paces one way and twenty more t'other, an' then 'e ups an' says to me, 'That window up there, facing outward from the tower—isn't that hers? Haw!' says 'e. 'Answer me!' And I tells 'im as 'ow 'e's guessed accurate. There was a light behind the window, burning dim. Swift as winkin' then 'e pulls out 'is pistol an' puts a shot slick through the window!"

"Hit anybody?" I asked.

"Not 'im! 'E shoots too 'igh. 'Tweren't 'is purpose to 'it nobody. Two or three 'eads moves about be'ind the bars pretty middling soon after that. They can't see who we are, 'cause it's dark, an' we can't make them out for the same reason, but they've been give notice as 'ow things of interest is taking place outside. It's my belief that Rosalie's not there but only a few of 'er women."

"I'm sure of it," I said. "She certainly wasn't there. I know where she was. Carry on."

"Well, we 'as to wait there a —— of a long time, stampin' an' fussin' an' smokin' cigarets. By and by Snoblauch comes out, an' Mr. Monty catches 'im by the scruff o' the neck, demanding by the great 'ornspoon to know where you are and what about yer—'im callin' you Yerkes, which I take it ain't your right name. It's Yerkes that Rosalie is sweet on, ain't it?

"Well, Snoblauch says 'e don't know, and Monty takes an' shakes 'im until the feller with the beard you all call Fred begs mercy for 'im for the 'arem's sake—which, if 'e'd only known it, the 'arem don't need no mercy! Them wives of 'is can comb the old man's 'air out proper. Monty gives Snoblauch a kick be'ind that delivers 'im mighty close to the 'alf-way post on the road 'ome, and we settles down to wait again. We waits a long time, too.

"It's my private impression we waits until Rosalie can finish bamboozling the shriek and is quite sure the coast's clear. At any rate, when she comes at last, she brings the eunuch with 'er, 'im 'aving 'is wrist tied in a cloth and no love in 'is craw whatever! The eunuch gives the orders, and we're all admitted, me included."

"Into the palace, to see the sheik?"

"NOT so 'asty! Not so 'asty! Believe it or not, that's the first time I've been inside the palace since I came to Dûm eight years ago! Rosalie beckons, sort o' mysterious, and we goes along in single file through all sorts o' passages, me walking last and the real Mr. Yerkes in front o' me. Finally we brings up at the corner tower and climbs up steps what was once a ship's companion into a room with windows facing inward, underneath 'er room what 'as the window facin' the street that Mr. Monty fired through.

"I never seen such another room in all my born days. Luxury ain't the word! Velvets—plush—crimson silks—satins an' carpets an' curtains—books on shelves—divans what come close to swallowin' a

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man when 'e sits down—cunning little glass lamps—Lord! I never seen such a sight!

"The lights was all lit. Soon as she gets into the room, she turns sharp round and gets a good look at Mr. Yerkes. You should 'ave 'eard 'er scream! Gawd! You'd ha' thought she was balmy! The eunuch comes up close an' shows 'is teeth, thinking maybe one of us was threatening 'is mistress. But she grabs 'old o' Mr. Yerkes by the arm and stares in 'is face as if 'er eyes 'ud burn 'im up.

"'You?' she says. 'You?' And she kisses 'im slap on the mouth.

"Yerkes, 'e looks foolish an' kisses 'er back, but she cuts that part o' the performance short and stands clear to take another look at 'im.

"'You was in ze cell!' she says. 'Me, I see you put into ze cell! Me, I kiss you in ze passage! 'Ow did you get out? Zat cell is all rock—*solide!*'

"It's pretty clear by that time to any one with 'alf an eye that neither Yerkes nor the other two knows what to say. They're took by surprize as much as she is. She makes us all sit down, me included, and calls for a little swine of a naked Arab named 'Assan, what never wears nothin' but a turban and 'ates me worse than cobras——"

"I think I know him," I said. "Go on."

"She sends 'im to go surreptitious and peep in through the cell door, her passing round cigarets meantime and cussing out the women something awful for not 'aving coffee all ready and piping 'ot. Along o' the cigarets she makes love to Mr. Yerkes a while, me blushin' all among the roots of my 'air—which I'm no believer in conventionalities myself! Presently that little beast, 'Assan, comes back with the news that the cell's empty and a big 'ole dug through the wall."

"Was she savage," I asked, "when she found out she had kissed the wrong man in the dark?"

"Not so 'asty! Not so 'asty! She goes into a rapture! She accuses this feller Yerkes of working miracles! She says 'e's the only genuine 'ero what ever come 'er way. A man, she says, what can dig 'is way out o' that dungeon an' come back looking clean and handsome wi' neither dirt nor blood on 'is hands, an' clean clothes an' what not, 'e's 'er feller, she says.

"'Were you a-goin' to leave me in there alone all night?' 'e asks 'er, and that starts 'er to making love to 'im all over again from the beginning.

"Under cover o' that, this 'ere Mr. Monty lays 'is 'ead next to Fred's, me fair makin' my ears twitch wi' trying to catch what 'e says.

"They agrees between 'em that the odds is a million to one you've come straight back to this place. But they also agrees that the wisest game is to keep Rosalie thinking as 'ow 'er version of the tale is right. Likewise they reaches the Solomon-wise conclusion that the right an' proper thing to do is communicate wi' you as quick as may be. Then I sees you when I comes in, but I says nothing."

"Did Rosalie know yet what the sheik's decision was regarding the man he thought was Yerkes?" I asked.

"Not so 'asty, mister! Not so 'asty! She asks Yerkes what the shriek 'ad said to 'im, and Yerkes gets out o' that by bidding 'er ask the old 'un 'imself. But at that 'Assan dips an oar in. The little beast's been listening all the while, and, though 'e don't know no English, 'e's sharper than what 'e looks. He begins to proceed to say that this ain't the same gent what was sentenced by the shriek. But 'e don't get far.

"I catches Monty's eye and promptly 'its 'Assan over the fish-trap that 'ard 'e won't eat no more fish for a month o' Sundays! O' course Rosalie wants to know what I done that for. I tells 'er 'Assan was makin' faces—which, if 'e weren't doin' it before I 'it 'im, 'e did afterwards; so I told no lie. 'Assan couldn't speak no more. All the little beast could do was yell fit to bust 'isself, and she sends 'im below till 'e gets better.

"The eunuch follows 'Assan down the stairs to get the truth from 'im, but that eunuch always was a stoopid, and 'Assan can't be made to say it plain 'cause o' cut lips. All o' the story 'e gets is that there's to be a great givin' o' presents tomorrow morning and 'im what was sent to the cell was to suffer for it if the presents ain't up to dick.

"That sets Rosalie in another whirl. She says when the shriek talks that way 'e means business and there ain't no stoppin' of 'im. And, that bein' the Gawspel truth, I confirms what she says—which she'd 'ave shot me, like as not, if I 'adn't, but it

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was the Gawd's truth all the same. A present to the shriek is something almost better than a ship in trouble.

" 'You must give 'im presents!' says Rosalie. 'You must give my papa very many good presents—much better presents than this foolish one that you gave me!' And she pulls out the repeating pistol.

"For about a minute I thought as 'ow she'd shoot me where I squatted on the floor. Mr. Monty thinks so, too, and motions to me to get be'ind 'im, which I does. Then Mr. Fred, 'e ups and says, 'Princess,' 'e says—'e calls 'er princess like 'e knew she was born to the purple, an' she fairly purrs at 'im—'we left one of our friends be'ind,' 'e says. 'We'd better send word to 'im about those presents!'

"Now, weren't that smart? 'E takes a chance on your bein' back 'ere already. And Monty jumps into the opening quick and says, 'Yes, Princess; we ought to send word to our friend about the presents. We had better send this man,' meaning me.

"She likes that, if only because it's an excuse to keep the real Yerkes in the palace until morning. She tells Monty and Fred they can go with me and 'elp take the message, but Monty puts on a last-ditch look and refuses. I reckon he's scared on account o' what might 'appen to Yerkes's morals! She's picked up one or two notions about Arab 'ospitality and don't see 'er way clear to turning 'em out into the moonlight; so the long and the short of it is that Monty turns to me and bids me cut and run.

" 'Tell 'im to do 'is best,' 'e says, 'and to use 'is ingenuity.' Them was his very words.

"SO 'ERE I be! And 'ere I stays until mornin' doth appear, only wishin' there was whisky! There'll be porters waitin' outside the gate to carry the presents as soon after first call for prayer as the echo is after the shot. So now you know!"

He settled himself into a corner of the couch and reached for another cigar, the fez tip-tilted over one eye giving him a drunken look in spite of enforced sobriety.

"And while you're 'unting presents," he remarked, "suppose you look up that suit o' reach-me-downs for me—them as Mr. Monty said 'e'd give me?"

I cross-examined him for a while but could not shake his story or get much more out of him. Whisky and a suit of clothes were the only ideas left in his head, and he talked of those until I ordered him to stop on pain of no more cigars.

Then, oppressed by the almost insuperable drowsiness that haunts the breathless Red Sea nights, I sat down at the other end of the divan to think the problem out. And be it written that I slept. I slept deep, and so did Villiam!

There is rightly no mercy for the soldier who sleeps at his post, and surely I was entitled to none, with my friends and myself at the mercy of a savage sheik and his ungovernable foster-daughter and that message "to use my ingenuity" still almost ringing in my ears. But men do fall asleep on post in spite of the penalty, and as for me, the limit of human endurance seemed to have been reached. The consolation was that Villiam slept, too; it would have been awful to be put to shame afterward by him.

And, whatever my deserts, sleep brought the solution of what to choose by way of presents for the "shriek."

Of all the explanations of dreams that I have read and listened to, none ever satisfied. Once, the night before going to the Derby, I dreamed the winner. I saw the crowd running along inside the railing and heard the shout, "Sir Visto wins! Sir Visto wins!" Next day courage failed me to bet on such a rank outsider. I plunged on the favorite. But Sir Visto did win, and I lost.

Once again on the high seas on a hell-ship I dreamed that the third mate fell overboard. Nobody loved him, but in the dream I threw him a line, which he missed, although it fell all about his shoulders, and the next wave smothered him forever. I told him of the dream at dawn. He called me a name they use frequently on such ships and struck me in the teeth. But it happened exactly as I dreamed it. I threw him a line. He missed it and was drowned.

Now again, in a corner of the cushioned sofa torn from the big stern cabin of some tall ship, I lay and dreamed so clearly that no actual adventure could have been more sharply impressed on my mind. It was not uncanny, nor yet terrifying. It was not as if anybody told me what was going

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to happen but simply as if I lived through the hours in advance, rehearsing, as it were, the parts we all should play.

When I awoke, as the strange way of dreams is, most of the details vanished from mind, but the salient points remained. The details came back to me afterward at the time of their actual happening, like memories of a former life.

I awoke with a start and a guiltier feeling than I had ever known. Leaving Villiam still snoring in his corner of the long seat, I went on the roof to shake off drowsiness and con my surroundings. There seemed to be a breath of air coming in from the west, and I stood for several minutes gazing seaward and filling my lungs. At the end of that time I saw three red rockets go roaring skyward and remembered they had done the same thing in my dream!

There was nothing to see but the rockets —no shadowy ships—no lights. When their flare had faded, there was only darkness where they had been. The strangest part was that I could not connect them up with the rest of the dream or fit the salient parts of the dream together in any way.

It was very nearly morning; so I went down into the courtyard, opened one of our largest chests, transferred some of the contents to my pockets, closed the chest again and wrapped it carefully in unbleached calico. Then, instead of waiting for the promised porters, I awoke Villiam and persuaded him with some difficulty to help me load the chest on the back of a donkey.

The donkey resented the imposition. For one thing, we had no pack-saddle; for another, he was a riding-donkey, unaccustomed to the ignominy of commercial loads.

"What's in the perishin' box?" demanded Villiam as I made a dive for the dozenth time and saved it from donkey-wreck.

"Breakables," I answered. "For God's sake, don't drop it!"

"D'ye mean whisky?" he asked. "Oh, crickey! Lord lumme, you're the wise one! Give the shriek a case o' whisky, and 'e'll be your friend till the jag wears off! But say, there must be two dozen in this 'ere case—why don't me an' you split a quart between us first? If we closes up the chest careful afterward, nobody'll never be no wiser!"

I would not yield, nor would he abate his demand. It was a matter with him of no whisky no performance now, and in the end the best terms I could make was to promise him one bottle for himself to be given him together with the suit of clothes after delivery of the whole case to the sheik. And at that I had to produce an odd bottle from Monty's hand-bag and let him see where I stowed it again so that he could come and fetch it in case of anything happening to me. He was not very sanguine of the party's chances, now that he had slept off the excitement and the novelty.

The time we had getting that donkey across the open space to the palace gate was busy, even considering the known characteristics of the donkey tribe and allowing for reasonable reluctance to leave his companions. Time and again one or other of us just contrived to save the case from destruction. Once the donkey tried to roll on it. And everlastingly Villiam begged me to let the brute smash it.

"'Cause then, dontchersee, we'll 'ave a good excuse for emptying one bottle! 'Ow's the shriek to know 'ow many bottles was in there?"

If I had not been carrying the rifle and had not threatened freely to use it, Villiam would have let the case drop on purpose. But something or other had given him the wholly false impression that I was the party's fire-eating member, and he chose to believe I would carry out the threats unless he behaved himself.

NEAR the end of the short journey the donkey began to gallop, hoping to break away and reach the palace well ahead of us, where he could get rid of his unwelcome load by the time-honored method of scraping along the wall. We only prevented him by the proverbial skin of our teeth and arrived at the main gate breathless about three minutes after dawn, before the last sounds of the *muezzin's* call to morning prayer had died away.

Of course there was no admitting us until the pious gate guard had said prayers, using sand unctuously instead of water for the ceremonial washing—to save trouble —and going through all the genuflections that the faithful are so sure will frank them into lustful paradise. To my disgust, Villiam joined them. Watching him do those acrobatics went against the grain,

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and having to hold that infernal donkey single-handed only added fuel to the fire of prejudice.

"Get up, you hypocrite! Cut that humbug out!" I ordered, trying in vain to force the donkey closer to him.

But all I got for my trouble was a kick from the brute myself and a smirk from Villiam when he had finished. He shrugged his shoulders with a gesture that included in its survey all the guard.

"You've been and gone and done it now!" he said.

He spoke the truth. I had merely called attention to my own abstinence from morning prayer, and the guard got off its knees with fanatical disapproval added to its normal distrust of any one with white skin.

"*Giaour!*" they growled at me and spat.

Who is always wise in a crisis? I have read of such people in books—and particularly in the books for boys that were inflicted on the youth of England in the early eighties. But I found that the tighter the case the more surely will the man's own normal, underlying nature emerge from the shell—which is only added reason for the sternest self-discipline at all times. It was my intolerance—contempt for what I did not approve of—racial pride and other traits even less admirable that prevented me then from entering the palace peacefully. They had orders to let me in and doubtless would have done it if I had received their abuse in silence. Instead of doing that, I kicked the man who called me "*giaour*."

It is necessary to see a faithful follower of the prophet kicked before appreciating the enormity of that act. He fired at me promptly but was so close that I knocked his rifle up, and he only singed my forehead. The remainder of the guard, not having been kicked in person but only included in the general blanket-insult to their creed and race, were satisfied to loose off their rifles all around me, snapping their fingers under my nose and prancing like marionettes on elastic strings.

None of that would have mattered very much; I had my rifle; I knew I was expected inside the palace alive, not dead. And, if the man I had kicked proposed to reload and have a second shot, I was ready for him. But their *feu d'affront* put a finish to the donkey's scant store of tractability. The brute bit through the leather rein, kicked up his heels and broke away.

"Presents!" yelled Villiam, forgetting in his excitement what tongue he was talking. He seized the nearest Arab and yelled in his ear, "Them's the presents for the shriek!"

Then he remembered and translated into Arabic.

In a moment all the guard except the rascal I had mistreated were scattering in full flight after the donkey, displaying vast experience in the art of heading him, but small skill in coming close. Whenever a more than usually swift pursuer made a dash to seize the broken rein, the animal spun on his forefeet more swiftly than a zebra—lashed out two or three times—and was gone again.

"If I'd only had the sense," I groaned, "not to disturb the contents of the chest!" I forgot that Villiam was close enough to hear.

"Took a bottle out, did you?" he demanded. " 'Ere, what did you mean then by refusing me a drink?"

I think he would have struck me, he was so indignant, but the follower of the prophet, who had not dared reload yet because that would have necessitated taking eyes off me, was so obviously in love with the prospect of seeing two white men at blows that Villiam found the temptation to disappoint him the greater of the two.

The Arab urged him to strike me—offered him a knife and nudged him. If I had been cool-headed enough at the time to appreciate it, the appeal of race to Villiam's deliberately calloused conscience ought to have exceeded all other interests. As it was, instead of striking me he turned on the Arab fiercely and in the end it was he who caught the donkey. They chased the brute our way, and he sprang and caught the broken rein.

Then somebody within the palace threw open the great iron-studded door, but it was not our time to enter yet. There came a procession of camels bobbing their heads across the desert from the north. One of the guards promptly backed me against the palace wall; another held the donkey, and the remainder formed themselves into a double line with suddenly reacquired dignity. Villiam came and stood beside me.

"This bloke what's coming," he said,

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"is the Bedouin Sheik of Urza, what wants to marry Rosalie. 'E's a swine for fair!"

They did not look like bridal camels. Surely no statelier, shabbier robber gang ever paraded across a desert! There were twenty camels—twenty riders—every one armed to the teeth and every camel's patchy hide showing through holes in the flowing saddle-cloths.

They did not seem to have come far. Probably they camped a little way outside the town on purpose to enter as soon after dawn as possible.

"How is it there's no crowd running along to gape at them?" I asked Villiam.

"Gawd knows!" he answered.

That was the only really remarkable thing about them. They were ordinary enough Bedouins, turning up in the ordinary way on business that, if not ordinary, was at least easy to explain. But why a sheik with twenty camels should be allowed to enter Dûm without a crowd of curious lookers-on was a mystery, when one considered that Dûm existed as it were from wreck to wreck, with only occasional thefts and murders in between.

The procession halted before the gate, and the camels kneeled after the usual harsh objurgations. Only two men stayed to mind them. The leader was a tall man, mean and solemn-looking, able to take in every detail on either side of him without moving his head—swarthy—straight as an arrow—lean as a man must be who wrings his living from Arabia's deserts.

HE STRODE in through the open gate with his followers close at his heels, all kicking off their sandals at the threshold but none of them shedding a weapon. They looked more like men going in to loot the place than peaceful suitors for a maiden's hand. Not a man spoke. Not a man looked to right or left of him. They strode straight in with the gait of conquerors and the smoldering eyes of lust.

Then the guard permitted Villiam and me to enter, leading the donkey between us, and just as I turned to go through the gate I saw Snoblauch emerge on donkey-back from the end of the street. He was kicking the beast along at something between a trot and a walk and looked hurried. I called Villiam's attention.

"Ho!" he jeered. "'Oose wives 'ad to saddle the moke this morning? 'E must ha' knowed this 'ere Urza sheik was coming—'ence the 'urry. 'E kids 'isself the Bedouin's 'is pal. 'E's building on being a court favorite after Urza marries Rosalie and the old 'un's underground. Poor old swizzlebrain!"

I had expected to be obliged to leave the donkey outside and had dreaded the indignity of perhaps being compelled to carry in the chest myself. The picture I had in my mind was of the dark inner chamber of the night before, and I expected to be led along the corridors again to that door and thrust through into "the presence."

However, nobody hustled or bothered us, and the donkey's presence caused no more comment than our own, even when he kicked out in random rebellion, making the contents of the chest rattle ominously. Instead of taking the mazy way of the night before, we followed Urza and his party straight down the middle of the building, out past a latticed screen into a courtyard of the usual sort with draped verandas on every side of it but one—the eastern, and that was high blank wall.

The courtyard was open to the sky, but in the center was a covered platform with a canvas canopy on four posts—the nearest thing I had seen in Dûm to a pleasance of any kind.

There were some shriveled flowers of a sort I did not recognize eking out a shriveled, dwarfed existence in the sandy soil on three sides of the platform. And on the platform were cushions and the inevitable water-pipe. It was obviously the place where the "shriek" took the morning air, and betrayed pitiful vestiges lingering in his breast of a belief that somewhere nature might be lovely.

The Bedouin chief of Urza sat down on a mat before the platform and curled his legs under him. His followers promptly began squabbling for other mats, each striving to be nearest to him and he rebuking them sharply to avert actual blows. At last they all settled down to wait patiently, Urza himself staring meditatively straight in front of him, but his following, like myself, all eyes to see between veranda curtains if that were possible. They were a drab, dusty, shabby-looking lot.

Nothing happening, and, nothing being visible—although I eyed every tear and every

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gap—I got Villiam to rise by threatening him with my rifle-butt and made him help me unload the donkey. I was puzzled what to do with the chest I had brought so as to show it off to best advantage. In giving gifts to an Arab chief there is no sense whatever in undervaluing them, even when life does not hang in the balance.

The Sheik of Urza had placed himself on the west side of the platform. Doubtless he considered that the most fashionable and dignified. I thought at first of choosing the side directly opposite for my own activities, but, as that would have entailed the "Shriek" of Dûm's turning his back to me whenever he noticed the Sheik of Urza, and I wanted all the notice I could get, I decided on the south side so that when the old man came he could sit if he chose and watch us both at once.

So I tied my rifle to me by a piece of string—not daring let go of it with all those desert-thieves, to say nothing of Villiam, within reach—and helped Villiam place the chest in the center exactly facing the platform's southern side. And, after arranging the calico covering to look as decent as might be, I stood well back, with the idea of giving the present a suggestion of greater importance. I stood farther back than I really intended, and Villiam came along with me until we stood closer to the southern veranda than I realized. In a moment I heard Monty's voice.

"Don't look round! I'm standing behind the curtain at your back. The position's pretty ticklish. We've been all night in Rosalie's quarters, and the 'shriek' has just found it out. He pretends to be utterly outraged. That man who has just come is the Sheik of Urza, expecting to arrange a wedding between himself and Rosalie. Rosalie objects, but Snoblauch has contrived to talk the 'shriek' 'round to his way of thinking. Now, to please Urza, Rosalie has been carried off and made to play the veiled lady. We're close prisoners. We were pounced on from the rear an hour ago, tied and searched. Now that they've got our pistols, our hands are free again."

"You see I've a rifle," said I.

"Lord send you wit to use it to advantage!" Monty answered. "Fred has been singing and playing for Rosalie all night; his throat is played out. Will's frightened Rosalie swears he's hers, and he's seeing visions of himself on Fifth Avenue with her on his arm. It seems Will's folk in the States move in very polite society, and he can't for the life of him see how to sidestep the issue either. Says he'd be a cad to leave the girl to the mercy of Urza and a bigger cad to take her home. I tell him not to worry—he'll be lucky if he lives the day out!"

"What would three red rockets mean out at sea an hour before dawn?" I asked over my shoulder.

"A wreck," said Monty. "They talk of a wreck outside the reef. They say the whole population has taken to the boats to go and plunder, and but for Urza's arrival the 'shriek' would be out there, too."

"If there's a wreck," said Villiam, "then Lord help the lot of us! They'll butcher the crew, and that'll give 'em blood-lust. Mark me—they'll come back and put the 'ooks into us double-quick!"

"Have you any plan?" asked Monty.

"Part of one," said I. "Tell Fred to turn the music on whenever he judges the time's ripe. It may create a diversion—who knows? If you fellows see me raise the rifle to fire, get as near me as you can. I funk being flayed alive. Let's die together!"

"Righto!" answered Monty cheerfully. "What did you bring the old devil for a present?"

AT THAT minute I noticed movement behind the curtains at the northern end and took a quick step forward rather than arouse suspicion by standing so close to where my friends were known to be. Villiam did the answering for me.

"Whisky!" he answered.

"Oh, Lord!" I heard Monty groan. "I was hoping——"

"Oh, Lord, my eye!" retorted Villiam. "Whisky's the one stuff the shriek 'ud rather 'ave than news of a wreck! Wait till the old card's drunk 'isself proper spiffed and then see!"

Snoblauch came in in his Arab clothes, barefooted like the rest of them and looking very benign and dignified with his snowy linen and respectable gray beard. He went straight to the Sheik of Urza and sat beside him, offering platitudes that met

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with very slight response. Urza was plainly in no mood for small-talk. Snoblauch saved his face by motioning me and coming over toward me. He paid no more attention to Villiam than if his former jack-of-all-trades had not been there.

"Gott im Himmel, mein Herr!" he began as soon as he was near enough to address me without being overheard by any one except Villiam. "This iss a bad predicament I vind you in! You haf escaped, eh? You come back with a rifle, eh? You haf the nerve to bring yourself the presents, and you think that nerve vill safe the day for you, eh? Let me tell you, you are totally wrong, my friend.

"You vill only succeed in annoying the Sheik of Dûm by appearing vith a rifle in his presence when you are supposed to be prisoner! Gif me that rifle, please! I vill take it and pretend it belongs to me. In that vay it may be ve shall deceife the sheik and turn away from you a little of the calamity."

The man actually had the conceit to think I would do what he asked. He held his hand out to take the rifle from me. Something in my manner, I suppose, arrested his attention and stopped him before he touched the weapon. It is impossible to say what I would have done had he not withdrawn his hand as if a wasp had stung him. I was half minded to discover which way the "shriek" liked him better—dead or alive.

" 'It 'im, sir! 'It 'im in the teeth!" advised Villiam quite loud enough for Snoblauch to hear, but the German continued to ignore him.

"Are those your presents for the sheik?" he asked, pointing toward the calico-covered chest. "You should not lay them there. It is better for you that I gif them to him vith a suitable vord of explanation. I take them and set them beside vhere I shall sit—*ja.*"

He walked over to the box, and I did nothing until he started to try to lift it. Then I coughed suddenly, and he looked back—as straight into my eye along the barrel of the rifle as eye to eye can see.

"Oh, vell," he said, straightening himself, "it is heafy. Maybe after all I leafe it there and let you take your chances."

He would have sat down very near it then, only that I continued to aim at him and would not set the rifle down until he had removed himself to the far side of Urza's party.

Then I heard Rosalie's voice, loudly protesting, using English swear-words that would have procured her arrest along the London docks and Arabic argument that only did not break rocks by its violence because there were none to withstand it.

Before she had finished, the "shriek" came in, leaning on the arm of the man who had interpreted to me the night before and looking very spruce indeed in bright red Morocco slippers. Never was linen whiter than that he was wearing. Nowhere surely was more perfect cloudy amber than the lumps he wore strung round his neck on silver wire. He took his seat on the cushions on the platform with a dignity simply sublime, reminding one more of a Christian bishop about to conduct a commination service than of anything else I could think of. Although I was sure he had seen me and at any rate perfectly sure that he knew I was there, I could detect no sign of annoyance or recognition.

Urza and his following stood up and gave him very stately salutation, calling on Allah, the Most High, the Merciful, to bless him and his household, at which the old rascal bowed his head with simply benign humility.

After that there was silence for about five minutes, broken only by one long shrill complaint from Rosalie. Then the "shriek" glanced at me. Then there was conversation tossed back and forward from mat to platform—sheik to "shriek." Then a glance at me again. Then the man who had interpreted the night before, who sat on cushions beside the "shriek," stood up and addressed me, rather as if he were speaking to a black slave.

"The noble Sheik of Urza has announced," he said in the educated English Mohammedans may learn at Cairo University, "that he brings to Abdul bin Mahmoud, the Renowned, the Magnificent, the Wrath and the Flail of God, the Lord of the Limits of Decency, the Sheik of Dûm, presents of five riding-camels fully caparisoned! What do you bring?"

"Hundreds of presents!" I answered.

"Where are they?"

"There!"

I pointed to the box I had so carefully draped with calico, and all eyes were instantly focussed on it.

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"What d'yer mean by tellin' 'im 'undreds and 'undreds o' presents?" grumbled Villiam in my ear. " 'E'll only get mad as a wasp when 'e finds out you're lying! Oh—I see, though! Aren't you the bright one! 'Undreds o' special sensations to the quart. I get yer! 'E'll see the point o' that!"

The "shriek" gave an order that I did not catch, and four men came out from behind the veranda curtains to carry the box closer to him.

"Stop!" I shouted. "I've something to say before the gifts change hands!"

A bomb could not have produced greater sensation.

"You are a strange giver of gifts!" sneered the Arab who interpreted, and the old "shriek" began to rock himself back and forward.

" 'E's working up a tantrum," Villiam whispered.

"I'll give no presents to any enemy!" I said. "There were words last night about my being flayed alive."

"Oh, Gawd!" groaned Villiam. "Pacify 'im, can't yer? Pacify 'im!"

At that point Rosalie broke bounds, all smothered up in a great black veil reaching nearly to her feet. She burst through the curtains with the eunuch after her, shouting in English at the "shriek":

"You shall not kill nobody! You ole stiff! You big —— fool!"

SHE had the repeating pistol in her hand and pointed it at every quarter of the compass, not by any means omitting the "shriek" himself, who lost his temper thoroughly at last and began to jump about and scream like an angry parrot. At that Rosalie tore the veil off, and there followed a game of tongue-lashing in Arabic and French and English that made mere Billingsgate sound like politeness by comparison.

The Sheik of Urza sat quite still, although his followers moved and whispered. Snoblauch got up from the carpet he was sitting on and joined in the argument in fluent Arabic, stamping his feet and shaking both fists for emphasis.

"What's he saying, Villiam?" I asked.

" 'E's tellin' the shriek to exercise authority and 'ave 'er muzzled and bastinadoed, prior to marryin' 'er to Urza, who'll know just 'ow to keep 'er in order. That's what Mr. Snoblauch says."

The German's persistent repetition of his argument began to tell at last. The "shriek" grew silent in order to think and regain his breath. Then he began to shout again, and this time in obedience to his orders four men came running out, seized Rosalie and pinned her arms to her sides. One of them threw a hand over her mouth, forcing her head back by main force and laying bare her beautiful white throat. It was pretty obvious that something a white man doesn't care to see was going to take place there and then before the lot of us.

"Stop!" I shouted at the top of my lungs, and for the second time my impudence succeeded where mere rightful authority would probably have failed.

"Shoot the swine! Make 'em let go of 'er!" urged Villiam.

I took my right hand from my pocket, and held it high with something in it.

"Translate!" I said to the man on whose arm the old "shriek" leaned, and every one in the courtyard grew as still as death.

"I hold one of the presents," I said, "in my hand. A box full of them lies in front of me. I will show first what this present is. Then there shall be a conference. After judging the worth of this one, if the Sheik of Dûm agrees, he shall have the others all at once!"

While the man translated that loud enough for all to hear so that the blackguard took his hand away from Rosalie's mouth and everybody gaped with interest—except the Sheik of Urza, who sat very still and dignified—I looked swiftly about me. The donkey who had carried the gifts gave me the right idea. He was scratching himself against the wall opposite, and I owed him neither love nor gratitude for the dance he had led me since dawn.

But in the second following that I experienced more sorts of sickening fear than any one man has right to. Memory of the donkey's caperings and kicks robbed the idea of all its brightness. He had jolted that case sufficiently to have smashed two dozen of whisky into wet glass fragments and strong-smelling straw! Wherefore, then, was there any donkey left? I clutched the stick of dynamite I held tightly enough to explode it, almost. Was anything wrong with the stuff? Would it fail to go off? If it did—but I dared not think of

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that. The interpreter finished interpreting, and every eye was on me.

I hurled the stick of dynamite with all my strength against the wall a yard above the middle of the donkey's back. And it did its duty!

The shock was greater than I hoped; the noise, being unexpected, scared the whole crowd utterly out of its wits. Why the whole box did not go off from the concussion I neither knew at the time nor can guess now, beyond that many people have told me dynamite is temperamental stuff.

The donkey simply disappeared, as did a section of the mud-brick wall behind him. Then a great slab from higher up sat down into the gap, and the whole wall split so that an enormous V stretched skyward. Rosalie shrieked with laughter; in fact, that was the first sound I grew conscious of after the din of the explosion and the crash of falling masonry, until I heard Monty's quiet voice beside me and found that he and Fred and Will had made a run for it and escaped their frightened guards.

"That was very well done indeed!" he said. "Don't let the effect wear off, though. Carry on!"

"Do zat again!" shouted Rosalie.

I raised my hand. Promptly, as if I had given them a prearranged signal, the shabby Sheik of Urza and his men started for the entrance at a run, sweeping by in front of me with only one thought—who should reach the camels first! I waited until the noise of their hurrying footsteps had died before I raised my voice. Then:

"Interpret again!" I shouted. "Here in my hand is another present. In my pockets are more of them! If I throw this one at the wall, the wall will fall down! If I throw it at the box, however, all the other presents like this one that are in the box will explode together, and all of you will go together to hell, the same as that donkey did!"

The man interpreted at length. Having been to Cairo and doubtless having seen dynamite in quantity at work, he knew I was not exaggerating. So he himself did exaggerate very thoroughly.

"Or if," said I when he had finished, "I should shoot at the box with this rifle I hold, then it would be the same thing. Choose ye!"

I made as if to throw the second stick, and Rosalie shrieked. Snoblauch began to make tracks for the entrance, but I ordered him back again, and he went as close as he dared to the "shriek" and whispered to him. I made as if to hurl the stick of dynamite at both of them, and the "shriek" capitulated, holding up both hands.

"Now, Monty," I said, "you take the hand and play it!"

"Not a bit of it," he answered. "You're doing famously."

"What'll I do next?" I asked, beginning to feel at a loose end—hysteria, no doubt.

"Get us our pistols back!" Fred answered promptly. "Didums, you —— fool, why don't you tell him what to say?"

Villiam was lying on the ground all that time, screeching with satanic laughter, holding his sides and rolling over, slobbering at the mouth and growing purple, amused and agonized—victim of all the emotions the renegade white alone knows how to suffer from.

"Gawd!" he kept yelling. "Gawd! Ko-ko-Gawd—an' I thought it was wuwu-whisky!"

Rosalie's captors had let go of her, and now she came running over to throw her arms around Will and cling to him.

"Our pistols back first!" I shouted at the "shriek," and this time it was Snoblauch who translated.

"I am telling him," he called back to me, "zat he need not fear reprisals from you if he only vill do ze reasonable zings you ask him! I am telling him to leave zis matter in my hands to make arrangements—*ja?*"

"Pistols!" I answered.

"Ha! I 'ave von of zem! I gif it not up!" laughed Rosalie.

But the other pistols were forthcoming. Somebody threw them, and they fell in the sand at my feet. Then Rosalie began to cajole Will.

"Now I nevaire marry to zat old Sheik of Urza! Now I marry to you! Now you and I togezzer make ze sheik, my papa, be'ave 'imself. Now you and I, we rule zis place and grow veree rich. Ve kill ole Snoblauch. He no good. Ve shoot Villiam. He no good; he not teaching me good English same as you spik it. Yes? You and I. You promise me? Promise me—now—quick!"

"Oh Lord!" moaned Will. "If only you'd got a mother to take you to!"

"Mother? My mother is dead. She say

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to me, 'Some day a man is coming from France and shall marry with you!' And then she is dead, and zey take away and bury her. You are ze man from France."

"No," said Will despairingly, "I'm not from France."

"You arre not from France? You vill not stay and marry vid me?" she demanded.

I DID not catch Will's answer to that, supposing he made one. A rifle-bullet whizzed by me from between the veranda curtains to our right rear—that is to say, from somewhere behind the latticed screen. I turned and hurled the second stick of dynamite straight to where the bullet came from, and whoever was responsible for that shot had fired his last one. That end of the veranda ceased to be, together with a ton or two of roof and party walls.

Loads of the stuff, including a twisted rifle barrel and part of a human leg, fell all about us, and there was panic over on the far side of the courtyard. But the "shriek" sat still. He would have had too far to run; I had a third stick ready, and he watched my hand like a dog watching a bone.

In a way the old man's inactivity was rather masterly, for all his world was crumbling about him, and now Rosalie, the apple of his eye and one trump-card for diplomatic purposes, was seceding in public to the enemy. Whatever he might have done would almost certainly have been the wrong thing, whereas by sitting still and saying nothing he left the next move up to us and stood an even chance with us of Fortune tipping the balance.

And the jade Fortune did, giving him apparently the best of it at first. There came a surging, panting, sweating crowd of fifty men through the entrance, and the din they left behind them gave notice that the women of Dûm were also up and doing, even if etiquette did not allow them to follow their menfolk into the palace.

These newcomers were too full of their own news to pay attention to us or even to notice the destruction the dynamite had done. They swarmed round the "shriek," all yelling at him together, and under cover of that the sly old rascal ducked and ran for the seclusion of his harem—they close on his heels, unwittingly forming a screen that protected him completely unless I cared to be ruthless and blow the lot of them to smithereens. Villiam was all for ruthlessness. So was Rosalie.

"Now's your chance, sir!" went into my ear on one side.

"T'row zem all a present!" chuckled the fairer temptress.

It was Monty, cavalry leader and born seizer of opportunity, who gave the order then that finally won us the game. I was for bolting for the open. Fred was for discussion. Will was too embarrassed by Rosalie's embraces to have any wit left for decision.

"Come on, now," said Monty, leading the way at a run. "Up with the box of dynamite and follow me."

He led the way; Fred and Villiam carried the chest; I took a strategic position on the flank with the rifle and a stick of dynamite, and Will brought up the rear with Rosalie.

And Monty led us straight toward the harem. Cavalry-fashion, unexpected as the devil, sudden as thunder, full pelt into the enemy's unprotected vitals!

Snoblauch had been borne along with the crowd when the fifty pursued the "shriek." He found himself now on the edge of the forbidden harem veranda, between the devil and the deep sea—between them and us. He hesitated—changed his weak mind—changed it again—and chose. Joining us, he was swept forward under the veranda curtains, through a short passage, into a hall in the very heart of Islam's inner stronghold, where slavery of woman makes forever for the slavery of man.

"*Oh, là, là!* See the women! See zem run! See zem hide!" laughed Rosalie.

"*Meine Herren!*" protested Snoblauch. "Let me advise you. Let me guide you. Leave that box of presents here—zey vill never dare to touch it—and come, run avay out of zis vith me!"

"Easy all," said Monty. "Put the chest down. This 'll do for the present!"

VI

"*MEINE Herren!*"

Snoblauch calmed himself with a prodigious effort. He looked very much like a native of the country in those voluminous Arab garments, except that his stomach protruded too much.

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The Red Sea coast is a land of lean kine and leaner people. That is why obesity in woman is considered the rarest beauty.

"Listen to me now! Be advised by me! You are in ze one place zat is utterly forbidden both by custom and religion. Villiam here vill confirm what I say."

"Aw—go to ——!" sneered Villiam.

"Rosalie—she vill tell you. An intrusion into ze harem of an Arab is never forgiven. I am Orientalist, and I know. You may commit any ozzer crime against ze Arab, and perhaps he vill forgive—but zis offense never! Is zat not so, Rosalie?"

For answer Rosalie leaned across Will's protecting bosom and spat with astonishing precision in the old man's face.

"Go to your own wives and let zem pull your 'air out—old fool!" she answered.

Meanwhile Monty's restless eye had been making survey, and now we were due for the benefit of that. The babel of low-bred Arabs outside the veranda, all calling to the "shriek" at once to come and lead them on some mad errand, was a fine diversion that prevented the palace minions from paying us undivided attention yet. Invasion by our small party was bad enough, Allah knew!

But the danger of being overrun by the quarrelsome fifty was too awful to contemplate, and every available servant was marshaled to line the veranda. We were watched but for the present unmolested. Monty leaned over—took Rosalie by the shoulder—and drew her toward him.

"Let me go, you!" she pouted, slapping at his wrist and trying to break back to Will's side.

But that was the wrong time for opposing Monty's will.

"What other way out of the harem is there except across this hall and into the courtyard?" he demanded. "Answer me!"

His manner, his voice and the unyielding clench of his fingers on her shoulder frightened her thoroughly. She glanced at Will—saw that he had no intention of coming to her rescue—and raised the pistol. I don't know who struck it out of her hand; Fred, Will and I all struck together. Snoblauch picked the pistol up, and I took it from him. Rosalie began to whimper.

"Answer me!" Monty demanded.

"Zere is none—no ozzer vay out!"

"Are you sure—positive?"

"Of course I am positive. Do I not know zis place, who haf' run in and out of it since I vas little?"

"Then to get out, your papa, the sheik, must cross the hall?"

"Yes, I tell you! Yes! Let go of me, ol' fool!"

"All right," said Monty. "Up those stairs then. Leave the dynamite where it is. Now—all together again!"

The stairs were to the right of the entrance. They were steep and narrow and led to a narrow balcony that ran the full width of the hall—about thirty feet.

"Vhat of me? I do not dare go up zere!" called Snoblauch. "If I trespass in a harem, vhat guarantee is zere zat nobody shall invade mine?"

"'Ear 'im," grinned Villiam. "Why, the old fool's 'arem is the coffee-shop of 'alf the town! Soon as 'is back's turned, there ain't one of 'is wives but——"

"Oh, listen to him! Oh, hear him!" shouted Snoblauch, coming running up after us. "Who are you, you vermin, to say such an untruth, vhen it is you who should have earned your pay by guarding my premises?"

"Pay?" grinned Villiam. "'Ark at 'im! Fish for dinner an' all the money ever I gets was what 'is perishing wives paid me for 'olding of my tongue!"

"Hold it, then," snapped Monty, as we all lined out along the balcony, with Rosalie as usual clinging to Will.

There was a door in the middle of the wall, and I stepped through it, pushing aside curtains on the other side.

"There's a bigger hall through there," I said, "with a much wider balcony than this overlooking it."

Monty went and saw for himself how the ground lay.

"Is there any other way from that hall into this one than through the door below this balcony?" he demanded, and Rosalie shook her head, slinking away from him.

She was unaccustomed to be mastered by any one and wondered whether to be meek or impudent.

"You see, you fellows," he said, "we command the situation. The window at that end overlooks the whole courtyard. This balcony commands the only exit into the courtyard, and the balcony behind us commands the harem. Couldn't ask anything better. I want volunteers now to go down

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and distribute the dynamite strategically."

Everybody except Snoblauch volunteered. Both Rosalie and Villiam were particularly eager, but Monty chose to keep Rosalie within reach and Will to keep her quiet.

Fred and I quickly went down—tore off the calico—reopened the chest—filled our pockets with sticks of dynamite—left a neat pile of the stuff on the floor where the box had stood—and carried more than half the chest-full through the lower door into the next hall, where we placed it conspicuously and came away.

After that we divided forces to some extent, Monty and I taking the inner balcony and leaving the others to guard the only door to the courtyard. The crowd of yelling Arabs had gone away, and all was quiet again.

"Now's the time for music, I believe," said Monty, and to Rosalie's immeasurable joy Fred unclasped his concertina and began to play.

Snoblauch crouched and shivered. He had lived long enough in Dûm to understand how recklessly we were heaping offense on unforgivable offense. Centuries might lapse, and Dûm would still remember how the sheik's harem had been invaded. But to endure the added desecration of that unrighteous music—the music of unbelievers—the riotous, loud-lunged, unintelligible din such as white men make in taverns, was worse than the roar of a conquering army.

A conquering army—in that land—would have cleaned up everything, leaving none to weep and none to be ashamed, but Dûm would have to live with the memory of our invasion, and every note of the raucous concertina was a nail in the sarcophagus of Arab pride!

"You see," said Monty to me, as we both leaned over the rail and looked down on the sparsely furnished inner hall. There were many cushions and some carpets and brass trays and ornaments, but very little else, and our box of dynamite was far the most conspicuous thing. "The whole point is to keep things moving. Give tham half an hour for more or less calm reflection, and they'll very likely think of some way of scuppering us. At any rate, time would give them courage. But the music is likely to bring their indiscretion uppermost."

FRED played "Killaloe" with all his might and then "The Wearing of the Green." He was half-way through the "Marseillaise" when a door moved at the far end.

"Ah! Here they come," said Monty. "That'll do for the present, Fred."

The music ceased on a crashing chord, and the wry face of Rosalie's eunuch emerged out of shadow. He stepped forward—eyed the box of dynamite—and retired again until his back was against the door. In that position he began jabbering in the local patois at such terrific speed that Fred, with his head through the door between the two balconies, could not follow him. Will pushed Rosalie through to help us out.

"He is saying," she translated, "what do you all want? He is saying, 'You should go outside and my papa ze sheik vill hav' somezing to say to you."

"Tell him," said Monty, "we'll talk with the sheik or nobody! Tell him to take that answer and be quick about it!"

Rosalie translated and evidently added insults of her own. The eunuch retorted savagely and backed out.

"Resume the music, Fred."

The strains of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" began to ring through the halls, and there was noise of much disturbance beyond the wall we faced—the wall through which the eunuch had come and gone again.

"I'm only a cavalryman, " said Monty to me. "There's only one side to my vision. The first maxim of cavalry tactics is, 'Keep the enemy guessing.' The second is, 'If you bother him enough, he'll make mistakes.' The third is, 'Take advantage of the enemy's mistakes to redeem your own!" I haven't a notion what will happen next. Have you?"

I had not. But we had not long to wait. The door at the far end opened again gingerly, and the eunuch reappeared, followed by two others of his pitiable profession. Last came the "shriek" himself, leaning on an ebony walking-stick with a silver handle.

"All right, Fred," called Monty, and the music ceased in mid-career.

Seeing us apparently unwarlike, the "shriek" sent the eunuchs back and faced us alone.

"*Oh, la, la!*" laughed Rosalie and began to talk Arabic sixteen to the dozen, until

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Will came through and put his hand on her mouth.

"Somebody 'd better watch the outer door," warned Monty, and Will went back again.

Then the "shriek" raised his head and, pointing with the ebony stick at Rosalie, commenced a tirade that for dignity and emphasis could only be compared to the sermons on Sinai in Bible days. His eye flashed, and his hand that held the walking-stick trembled with fury rather than feebleness. Rosalie giggled and flushed in turns and, for the first time since we had seen her, exhibited symptoms of remorse.

"What is he saying?" demanded Monty.

"He is saying I am veree bad woman. He is saying he no forgive me nevaire. He is saying he cast me out. He is saying he take me in formerly and love me and mak' pet of me and give me everyzing, and all I bring him is zis shame on 'is gray 'ead. Oh, I am afraid. I am sorree. Oh! Oh!"

She burst into tears and threw herself down on the floor of the balcony, sobbing as if her heart would break. Monty frowned and set his teeth as the old sheik came to an end of his rhetoric and stood grimly dignified, waiting for our reply.

"'Ow would it be if Hi was to talk with 'im, sir?" asked Villiam, coming forward to the rail.

"Very well," said Monty. "Call his attention to that box of dynamite. Explain that we can blow up the whole palace and everybody in it whenever we care to."

Villiam commenced, throwing his arms about like a demagog speaking from the forum. The "shriek" interrupted him with an outburst of venomous Arabic.

"What does he say?" demanded Monty.

"He says truly," answered Snoblauch, "zat zis man Villiam is a low fellow and he vill not demean himself by listening to him. Permit me, *mein Herr*, to do ze honors."

"Very well," said Monty. "Tell him what I told the other man to say."

Snoblauch began in his floweriest manner, using both hands in wheedling gestures and evidently prefacing his remarks with prolonged apology. The "shriek" interrupted him, too, curtly, abruptly, with a snarl.

"What does he say now?" asked Monty.

"'E says," answered Villiam promptly, "this 'ere ole German's belly is a bag o' wind and 'e won't listen to no such noises!"

"Fred," said Monty, "you're our last chance. Do the talking."

Fred came and leaned across the balcony rail, stepping gingerly lest he put his foot on the sobbing Rosalie. He began to speak in pure Arabic, but the "shriek" interrupted him, too.

"He says I'm an infidel," laughed Fred. "He won't talk with infidels."

"Call him a —— ship-wrecking old murderer!" snapped Monty.

Fred did, Villiam holding his sides the while with irrepressible excitement. And the effect was just opposite of what any of us expected. The "shriek" took it for a compliment!

PERHAPS he misunderstood the exact meaning of Fred's scholarly Arabic, his own detestable patois being a conglomerate of other tongues with altered shades of meaning to many of the more familiar words. At all events his face brightened for the first time since entering the hall, and he looked at Fred with the appraising eye of a sportsman who has found his like at last! He began talking swiftly and emphatically.

"He wants me to go down there and chin with him!" Fred announced.

"Don't you," advised Monty. "Tell him to say what he has to say out aloud!"

"Oh no! Go down and talk vith him!" insisted Snoblauch. "I can assure you he vill not harm you. Vonce *der alte Herr* has gifen his vord of honor there is no further necessity for caution. If you go down and talk with him, I accept full responsibility."

Monty smiled.

"You are afraid?" asked Snoblauch. "Zen I go instead. Oh yes, I go. I go down and talk viz him in your name—*ja?*"

Rosalie looked up with tear-stained, swollen eyes and shook her head violently.

"Zat ole man is playing treeck," she warned. "Zis ole fool, Snoblauch—trust 'im also not at all!"

"Carry on, Fred," said Monty, and Fred began again with his scholarly Arabic, speaking very slowly, repeating whatever the "shriek" appeared to fail to understand and waiting patiently while the "shriek" talked back at him in a language that was almost unintelligible.

Long before the linguistic duel was finished, Snoblauch had grown beside himself with excitement, and Villiam scarcely less so.

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"What's it all about?" I whispered.

"Just you wait till you 'ear, that's all," grinned Villiam. "There's a proposition bein' broached as 'll make your 'air stand on end."

At last the conversation ceased, and the "shriek" sat down on a pile of cushions so that Fred could confer with us.

"I began by telling him," said Fred, "that we came ashore here to look for traces of King Solomon and for no other reason and that we're scandalized and all that sort of thing by his disgraceful treatment of us. He cut me short by saying that we're bigger pirates than he is, and he knows it because otherwise why should we travel with such a box of lightning-maker! I told him the explosive is for exploration purposes, and his answer to that was, 'Then why should we offer to give it to him?' He's convinced we're born pirates and that we've come here to steal his girl; so he makes us the following offer. Now hold your breath, all of you!

"There's a steamship in the offing, outside the reef. Been there since midnight. Sent up rockets an hour before dawn, supposed to be signals of distress. Practically every able-bodied man in town took to the boats at once and put out to plunder, but on arriving at the ship they find she is not anchored and not on the rocks but able to move up and down just fast enough to keep them at a safe distance. They've tried all the tricks they know to get her to run on the reef, but nothing's doing.

"So the 'shriek' proposes that one of us should go out to the ship and, being a white man, get aboard. He promises, if one of us will induce the captain to try to bring his ship inside the reef, he will give Rosalie to Will here and show us the cellars of Solomon. He says some of his men have already been to our quarters and taken every stick we own. We can have everything back by way of reward after the wrecking is over. What shall I answer him?"

"Let me tell you vhat to answer him!" said Snoblauch.

"You should tell him 'yes.' You should tell him zat you delegate me to go and speak viz ze captain of zat ship. Zen I vill arrange some vay of your being rescued!"

"No! No!" urged Rosalie, shaking her head violently. "Vhen zat ole zing go—oh, no, no— Villiam, you tell!"

Snoblauch glared at Villiam with the sort of look lion-tamers are supposed to depend on for safety.

"None of your tricks now," he said meaningly, but Villiam snorted.

"I ain't afraid o' you no more," he answered. "Listen, you gents. The last wreck there was on this shore, Snoblauch 'e goes out in a boat an' talks about bein' German consul an' persuades the captain to come in through the reef. The 'shriek's' men does the dirty work that night, but Snoblauch, 'e gets 'is dividend same as the rest of 'em!"

"Is that true?" demanded Monty.

"No, *mein Herr!* Vould you take ze vord of a low-down beach-comber such as Villiam against my vord?"

"It is true! It is! It is!" shouted Rosalie.

"Ask the 'shriek'!" ordered Monty.

Fred leaned over the rail and put the question slowly and distinctly. The "shriek" shrugged his shoulders and answered at some length.

"He says it is true," Fred turned and told us. "Only he adds that Snoblauch has tried so many times since to blackmail him on account of it, by threatening to write to Germany and to Turkey and to England and all sorts of places, that he's weary of the man and won't employ him any more!"

Monty turned on Snoblauch coldly and addressed him without rancor in a level voice.

"I shall kick you down those stairs," he said, "unless you go of your own accord at once. If I ever catch sight of you again, that will be at your risk. Go!"

"Do you judge me on ze strength of Villiam's vord and zat pirate's?" Snoblauch demanded.

"Thank God, I'm not your judge!" Monty answered.

"Zen vhy do you order me to go?"

"Because I'm judge of my own actions and inactions. Shall I count ten? Or will you go like a free man?"

Snoblauch turned away.

"Come along, Villiam," he called. "Zis is no place for us. Come at vonce—zat's a good boy."

"'Ark at 'im!" jeered Villiam. "Hi've worked for that old devil acause o' Rosalie and there not bein' no other means o' living on this beach. Along o' 'is talk I becomes Mo'ammedan. Hi've done dirty work for

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'im. But I knows gents when I sees gents, and me and 'im ain't 'itting it no more—not if Hi knows it!"

SNOBLAUCH went down the stairs with more speed than dignity, backward glances betraying fear lest Monty's toe prove less judicial than his words. He slunk out into the courtyard, and where he went after that we neither knew nor cared.

"Now whatever we are, Fred, we've got to pretend we're cowards," said Monty. "There's no other way of establishing communication with that ship. We've got to do that or die in this hole. Make terms with the old scoundrel. Ask him first where all those men are who came storming into the courtyard a while ago."

Fred put the question, and the "shriek" replied.

"On the beach," Fred told us. "They went away because the 'shriek' had the nerve to promise them without consulting us that he'd send one of us to board the ship to fool the captain!"

"So he thinks things are reversed, does he? Thinks we're at his mercy, not he at ours?"

"You bet he does," Fred answered. "Our best course is to dynamite the palace and die in it. Suppose one of us goes to the ship. That one's safe, but how about the others? Who shall rescue them?"

"Observe the Nelson touch," said I. "The treacherous old wrecker depends confidently on our man bringing the ship in to destruction rather than leave his friends behind."

Monty nodded.

"Tell him," he ordered Fred, "that we agree to his plan in general principle but are still talking over the details. Add that at the slightest hint of treachery on his part we'll blow this whole place to ——! He looks too pleased with himself to satisfy me!"

While Fred was translating that into Arabic, Monty addressed himself to Rosalie.

"Get up, Rosalie!" he said with that unimpassioned voice of his that even angry women would obey.

She rose to her knees, looked at him rebelliously and then got up and faced him with sullen disrespect.

"You need to think now," he told her. "We're going away. You're a white woman, and your place is not here among these savages. You must choose whether you will take the risk of trying to escape with us, or whether you will stay here."

"And 'e? Does 'e go?" she asked, pointing at Will.

Monty nodded.

"Zen I go, too!"

"You may have to leave all your belongings behind."

"I go if zat man go!"

"You will have to obey absolutely—to hold your tongue—to make believe what you are told to make believe—and—you have read the Koran?"

She nodded.

"Not me read—no. I 'ave 'eard it read."

"You know the story of Lot's wife?"

She nodded vehemently.

"You must not dare look back!"

"Oh, olright," she said with a sigh. "I obey everyzing."

"'Ow about me?" demanded Villiam. "I ain't goin' to stay be'ind if she goes. She's all I've lingered 'ere for any'ow."

"Shut up!" snapped Monty.

But Rosalie had heard, and soft sentiment refused to be denied.

"Oh, Villiam," she exclaimed, "you are after all not so veree bad. I forgif you. I am glad I not shoot you. Some good games ve 'ave ad', *n'est ce-pas?* I vill not go vit'out you!"

Villiam turned away with a tear in his eye, and Monty addressed Will Yerkes.

"Listen to me, Will," he said. "I want no back-talk! Take that girl to the ship, while we three stay and throw the bluff. One reason why you're the man to go is that the girl will go with you without argument. Another is that you're the last-joined member of the party. A better reason yet is that we three men are English. It wouldn't be decent to give the only non-British member of the firm anything but the best end of the deal. The best reason of all is that I was elected captain of the party, and I order you. Now—no back-talk! Tell the girl you're going, while Fred informs the 'shriek'!"

Will looked at him for a moment with a queer, half-humorous, wholly appreciative twinkle in his eye.

"There's only one other breed of man talks that way in a tight place," he said. "We do it in the States. I talk your language. I'll go. If there's any way on

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earth of coming back for you men, count on me. But the girl goes to Europe. Is that it?"

Monty nodded. So did we all. Then Fred once more gave his attention to the "shriek."

"Tell him," said Monty, "that the only sure way we know of to tempt a European skipper to let passengers on board is to have a woman in the boat. Say that, unless Rosalie goes along to make the trick feasible, we won't have anything to do with it."

Fred interpreted that slowly and distinctly, and once again the "shriek" astonished us with a wholly unexpected point of view. He rose to his feet and stormed at our balcony, where Rosalie slunk out of his sight behind Will and trembled in horrid fear of the curses he hurled at her.

It seemed that the only thing she did not have was his permission to remain in the palace a day longer. He was done with her. He condemned her. He cast her out. She had caused him to be put to open shame before the Sheik of Urza and his men, and the tale of that would go all up and down Arabia until the very dancing-women would sing it in the coffee-shops. He cursed her by every ancestor he owned, including in the commination all her possible future offspring.

And he ended by vowing that, unless she did make herself useful by going out to the ship and helping trick the captain, he would forbid her ever to set her foot again on the streets of Dûm. It did not enter his crazy head that any woman who had once learned Dûm's delights would ever elect to leave the place. No Arab woman would dream of leaving it. Then why should Rosalie?

He was out of breath when he had finished, and then Fred nearly took our breath away by translating what he had said. There remained very little after that but to make the final dispositions as swiftly as possible. We gave Will two pistols and several sticks of dynamite—in case of trouble with the pirates on the beach—and even Villiam shook him by the hand.

ROSALIE was much too excited to think about the things that would have troubled any ordinary woman. She never had troubled for tomorrow and did not propose to begin at that interesting moment. She kissed Villiam good-by with a fervor that would have been less displeasing if she had not insisted on doing the same to us immediately afterward. The sensation was of having kissed the beach-comber by proxy! He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and grinned like a man at a fair pulling faces through a collar for a prize.

"That's the fu'st perishing time she ever done that to me—strike me pink if it ain't!" he remarked to the balcony at large and then wiped his mouth a second time to find out whether or not the flavor lingered.

"If we can manage it," said Monty, "we'll be waiting for you on the beach, Will, when you return with a ship's boat. If you can't come, you're forgiven in advance. If you do come and don't find us waiting, come here—provided there's any palace left. Good-by, old chap! The best of luck!"

Will went down the stairs with Rosalie on his arm, and Villiam actually blubbered until Monty saw fit to put him to work, as much for our own peace of mind as for the beach-comber's benefit.

"There's too much dynamite in that case," he said. "It would kill us all as well as the enemy. Go down, William, and carry the greater part of it up here."

"Crickey!" said Villiam, clowning again in his voluminous, filthy-looking Turkish pants. "What if I was to drop some and if goed off?"

Monty rounded on him like a whiplash.

"Look here, my man! You've been in the British Army. No use trying to deny it. I never make a mistake on a point like that. You've handled explosives by the gross and seen them dealt with by the ton!"

"Not dynamite, sir, no, sir. Didn't 'ave no dynamite, sir. I weren't in the sappers, I was——"

"I don't want to know your secrets!" Monty answered, cutting him short. "Go down and bring up that dynamite in handfuls. Keep on doing it until I tell you it's time to stop."

Villiam proceeded to obey, with rather a stiffer back than usual, whistling to himself and seeming at last to take comfort for obedience' sake.

"I put half a case-full there for the 'shriek' to see at first," said Monty to Fred and me, "because the main point was to terrify him. We still need him afraid, but it stands to reason the edge of his fear

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is wearing off, and we'll need ammunition if he decides to take chances. A few sticks left down there in the bottom of the box will be enough."

We heard Will's strong boots go clumping out across the "shriek's" veranda, with Rosalie chattering on his arm. We heard her voice still laughing as they reached the latticed screen and the passage leading out to the main gate. And we drew the safe conclusion that nothing untoward occurred before they reached the open, because neither pistol-shot nor dynamite awoke the echoes.

After that there seemed nothing left to do but to watch the "shriek" and wait. He was as interested as we were in Villiam's trips up and down, and he eyed the fast emptying box with a look of increasing comfort, until Fred assured him there were plenty of sticks remaining to blow him backward through his harem wall. After that he grew fidgety.

At the end of half an hour he announced his intention of retiring through the door behind.

"Tell him no!" said Monty, and Fred did.

But the door behind him opened, and the eunuch who had been Rosalie's came through and whispered to him from behind. After that there was more than a little movement behind that door, and every now and then it was pushed ajar. On those occasions the "shriek" pricked his ears so obviously that we could not fool ourselves no whispering was going on.

"What's to prevent the eunuchs or the women of the harem from talking and making signals to people on the veranda or in the courtyard?" I asked.

"Nothing," said Monty. "It's being done. I suspect there's a plan on foot to creep along the veranda in force and take us by surprize."

I went to the window at the end of our balcony, tore the curtain down and looked out.

"There are men gathering around the thing with a roof over it that the 'shriek' sat on in the courtyard," I said. "There are more than twenty already, and they're beckoning to others."

"All right," said Monty. "They may not mean murder. Wait until we're sure of them. Will that window open?"

I wrenched at it.

"Yes," I said. "It gives."

"Be sure. If it won't, be ready to break every atom of glass on the instant."

"It's ship's glass," I answered, "tougher than metal. All right—the frame moves—I've got it open. We command the courtyard through it!"

"Have you dynamite ready? Stand by there, then," said Monty. "Fred, old chap, what do you say to another tune? It might possibly make the 'shriek' too bad-tempered to use his wits!"

A moment later the strains of one of Albert Chevalier's ditties burst forth and made the palace harem ring again.

"What cheer!" all the neighbors cried.
"Oo are you goin' to meet, Bill? 'Ave you bought the street, Bill?"
Laugh! I thought I should ha' died,
When I knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road!

VII

SAS A matter of fact our position was hugely worse than it appeared at first sight, although first sight was bad enough. The present checkmate in which we held the "shriek" depended entirely on his belief that we would be unscrupulous enough to explode the dynamite in front of him and blow up his harem with himself.

We would have blown him up without compunction if we could have done it without risk to the women behind the wall at his back. He simply was not civilized enough to suspect us of qualms on the women's account.

If the old pirate had but known it, his very safest trick would have been to bring his wives and concubines up close behind that party wall and prove to us that they were there. Even immediate personal danger of life could never have induced us then to risk that massacre.

Under the circumstances, what he did decide to do was fairly sportsmanlike, for him, but much the best thing for us. Perhaps Fred's music unhinged his judgment.

"Suppose Will and the girl reach the ship safely," said I. "Suppose Will persuades the captain to risk sending a boat, or boats, and suppose the boats, with armed crews, reach the beach. There'll be a whole town-full of disappointed Arabs to deal with. Can we fight all Dûm?"

"I told you before," Monty answered. "Our only chance is to take advantage of

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the enemy's mistakes. By my reckoning, supposing everything goes well, it should take Will between two and three hours to reach the ship—three hours probably by the time he has had his parley and been hoisted aboard. Allow him an hour for confab and persuasion. Two hours to return—European crew, presumably, with oars—quicker, you know. We might hear from Will again by three this afternoon. Plenty of time for the 'shriek' and his followers to make mistakes. Suppose you pay more attention to watching from that window."

It was well I did. For a short time past there had come a sound of thumping not easy to account for. It had seemed to come from the harem wall, perhaps under the veranda, and at any rate from a spot out of my line of vision unless I should push my head and shoulders through the window —an obviously unwise thing to do.

There was no crash of falling masonry, but a constant thumping, as of a crowbar striking stone. Presently the thumping ceased, and then at last I saw the key to the solution. Two men, eunuchs presumably, carried out a large lump of stone and laid it carefully on the courtyard sand. Then somebody shouted, and all the collected ruffians by the little roofed-over platform in the center turned their backs.

"They've made a hole in the harem wall and are transferring the women," I said.

"Thank the Lord!" grinned Monty. "Now I can tell you their next move. Their first is into our hands."

Fred clasped up his concertina.

"Come on!" he said. "Hazard your conjectures, Solomon!"

"They'll divide forces," said Monty. "One party will enter the harem through the hole they've made. The other will cut off our way of escape to the rear. It's likely they've brought up men who did not see the dynamite behave. Their plan will be to attack from front and rear simultaneously. The 'shriek' hasn't the slightest idea of keeping faith, you know. He thinks Will is safely on the way to trick the steamer captain, and he'll argue we're only a nuisance, the sooner out of the way the better! He sits there thinking we're wholly unsuspicious of fresh treachery."

I began to see the women now. There was a party wall across the veranda at one place, which obliged them at that point to come into the open and accounted for the men in the midst of the courtyard turning their backs. A positive stream of them began to curve out and in again in single file—a dismal-looking, slowly-moving procession, hidden from crown to heels in brown or black and shepherded by sexless brutes who would have wrung the necks of a dozen of them with no compunction whatever at the chance whim of their master. Surely Rosalie, with her Europe-born rebellious contempt for veil and its pseudo-sanctity, had enjoyed a better lot than theirs! Not, though, that they would have admitted it!

"Come and look!" said I. "There were twenty-two before I lost count, and they're still coming!"

But Monty refused to leave his post. He was standing facing the "shriek," with his back to the door between the two balconies and Villiam on his left. Fred and I had the narrow balcony above the outer hall to ourselves.

"There goes the last of 'em," I announced. "Yes, you're right—there's a gang of cutthroats armed for the most part with long knives, but four or five have rifles, starting to go in through the hole the women came out of!"

"Let 'em," said Monty.

"What's the 'shriek' doing?" I asked.

"Working back toward the door behind him by inches at a time! When I threaten him with a pistol, he stays still for several minutes. Then he begins again."

"Why not fire just once by way of argument?" said I. "Don't hurt him—scare him!"

"It might be the signal for the scrap to begin," Monty answered. "It's better to leave them to work up their own courage and give their own signal—I think."

But he was wrong that time. I heard Villiam urging him in whispers to "shoot and not care nothin' for that ole swine!" It was an entirely gentlemanly, wholly impractical dislike of the idea of firing on an elderly unarmed man that kept him hesitating, unfaithful to the cavalry tactics he so loved and well understood.

"There's another party of them now beginning to make tracks for the veranda to my right!" I warned. "Twenty—twenty-five—thirty—thirty-five—forty of them! Once they're under the veranda, they'll be out of sight. I could blow up the lot of 'em

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now with one stick of dynamite. Say the word!"

He made a sudden exclamation.

"Ah!" it sounded like.

Then his pistol barked once. I sprang back from the window and crashed into Fred as we both tried to see through the door what was happening. The "shriek" was gone. Monty's bullet had splintered the top panel of the door too late. The old rascal must have jumped like a man of less than half his years.

"Back to your posts!" Monty ordered.

The first glance through the window was enough to show me that the enemy had acted while I looked away. Not one was in sight, but the loose veranda curtain bulged and bellied in evidence of an advancing hidden wave of men.

"I'm going to open fire," said I.

"Go ahead," said Monty. "Here comes the other gang through the door."

I HURLED a stick of dynamite. It fell short but exploded and broke a veranda-post. How many men it killed or injured I had no means of guessing, for the curtain merely blew inward without tearing, as before a gust of wind, and settled among the débris. Then part of the mud roof collapsed on top of all. The greater part of the oncoming enemy took to their heels across the open, and my second stick completed their rout, blowing four of them to pieces and leaving three more lifeless on the ground.

Monty began his work with a pistol, but I suppose they came too fast for him through the harem door. At any rate I heard six shots and then the crash of dynamite. He told me afterward that it was Villiam who hurled the explosive, but that was not until we had first found Villiam and dragged him out, bruised but living, from among the débris of floor and walls and roof.

And Fred and I had to find Monty first. In order to do that, we had to clamber down cautiously into a chasm where the harem hall had been.

The great, thick wall between the two balconies saved Fred and me—and the rest of the dynamite—although a blast of wind came through the opening that knocked both of us off our feet. Villiam's stick of dynamite exploded in the midst of the savages swarming through the door and detonated the remainder in the chest! It rained building stuff and bloody bits of Arab for what seemed minutes.

It was a marvel there was any palace left at all! All that did go were the outer walls and roof and floor of that one section. But the reason for that was obvious as soon as the dust and fumes had cleared away and we could see down into the yawning chasm. There had been nothing underneath to offer resistance; instead of driving its full fury up and outward, the dynamite had squandered half its force. The harem hall had been built above a cavern. The floor-beams—mostly the ribs and beams of martyred ships—were a bridge!

Deaf from the concussion, dazed by the stupefying noise and fumes, Fred and I stared down through the gap in the wall for several minutes before either of us could think of a way of getting down to look for Monty. Then Fred thought of the carpet in the outer hall—a long, narrow strip—and went down to fetch it. In two minutes after that I was hanging on to it while he lowered himself down into the abyss. When he reached bottom he shouted to me to stay up there with the rifle and guard against attack.

But attack was out of the question. There was nobody left within the four outer walls of that great building with nerve enough to attack a stray dog. And Fred had to call me down after all, for he discovered Monty with a fallen beam pinning him down and could not lift it single-handed.

So I tore strips from the carpet and lashed it fast to the balcony-rail—then came down, rifle and all, and added my strength to Fred's. By a miracle the beam had pinned Monty down without harming him. Most of its weight was upheld by the end of another lump of wood, and the moment our combined effort raised the beam a fraction of an inch he was able to crawl free, not much the worse except for a dozen bruises and a cut above the eye. It was he who insisted on hunting for Villiam before starting anything else.

We located the beach-comber by his groans, by which we judged, too, that he was far less hurt than frightened. He was lying in a corner under a pile of débris with his left leg forced nearly round his neck and his mouth full of dry dust.

"D'yer mean to tell me, gents, as I ain't

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dead?" he demanded when we had dragged him loose and he had spat most of the dust out. "Gawd! I thought I was dead and in 'ell!"

It was an extraordinary place in which we found ourselves, shaped something like the hull of an old-time ship—a hollow partly natural and partly hewn out of the rock, with shelves or ledges near the top on which to rest floor-beams. Now that both the floor and the roof above that had vanished and blue sky poured down hot light, we could see into nearly every nook and cranny, and presently I spied three huge holes like the ends of sewers at the farther end. They had been covered with wood, but the explosion had reduced the doors, or lids, or whatever they were, to splinters.

"Tunnels!" I said, pointing. "Three of 'em!"

We made our way through the débris leisurely until the sound of groaning lent us wings. A moment later, in the mouth of the middle hole, we came on the "shriek" in a sitting posture rubbing his naked head and his elbows alternately. At sight of us he grew silent at once, his sensations smothered by a new one.

The hole he was in turned out to be a short tunnel that led to the floor above and was closed at its upper end by an enormously heavy trap-door. The trap-door was either bolted or else loaded down with weights, for my utmost efforts failed to move it. The "shriek" suddenly took a fancy to the tunnel in spite of, or perhaps because of, its darkness and scurried along it, we following.

When we were all in the tunnel except Villiam, he showed a disposition to talk terms and began jabbering his bastard Arabic, until it dawned on him that Villiam had deserted us. Then he gave his hand away. He had decoyed us up the tunnel of set purpose, for he scurried out past us like an eel—turned sharp to the right at the mouth—glanced down that hole—doubled back across the tunnel mouth to the other hole—looked into that—drew an enormous knife—and flung himself at Villiam!

Not that we knew he had found Villiam until yells for help brought us racing to the rescue. There, at the end of the short hole, the knife was going like a flail, with Villiam's both hands hold of the "shriek's" wrist and more curses flying to the minute than a cat-and-dog-fight ever loosed. I missed sheathing the knife in my stomach by sheer good fortune as I brought the "shriek" to ground and sat on him, while Monty took the knife away. Then I clapped my hand to my pocket, and, if I swore, I had excuse.

"What's the matter?" asked Monty, striking a match. "Are you hurt?"

For answer I removed my hand from the hip pocket and showed a stick of dynamite! Why I had forgotten I had it there—why it had not exploded and blown me and "shriek" and cave and every one to smithereens, were mysteries. It detonated finely later when the right time came to use it.

MONTY'S match showed what the "shriek's" anxiety and change of mind were all about. Villiam's tattered clothes were leaking gold coin! There was an old wooden chest on the floor of the cave with its lid burst open. I kicked it, but the bullion it still contained was so heavy it did not move. Fred went down on his knees and dipped both hands in, lifted them up and poured back gold coin in a ringing shower.

"Bring some of that to the light!" ordered Monty.

I stayed behind to watch the "shriek," who was about as full of planless fury as a cow robbed of her calf.

"What is it?" I asked, and Fred answered:

"Gold coin! Loot from the cabins of merchant-ships!"

"Old stuff?" I asked.

"Old and new."

"Come back in here," I said. "The old pirate is squinting after something in the corner."

They returned and rummaged. Presently I heard the ringing clink that no man hears and forgets—suggestive of infinite opulence—unmistakable.

"More than a hundred ingots!" said Monty's voice.

"Gold?" I asked, although I knew.

"Count 'em!" said Fred, suddenly grown practical.

"A hundred and ten!" announced Monty.

We did not wait to see what further treasures the cavern held, for faces began to peer down from above. I threw the stick of dynamite that had so strangely not exploded. This time it went off like

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a cannon and sent a hundred-weight or two of courtyard sand down in among us. It certainly "cleared decks."

Then we found the "shriek's" turban—a most voluminous affair—crumpled and soiled among the dynamited rubbish. He claimed it at once, but Monty had a better use for it than to comfort his iniquitous, bruised cranium. There were thirty yards of it of finest silk. With one end he tied up the wooden chest. Then he and I dragged and shoved and heaved and carried it over beams and débris to where the carpet still hung. Fred followed, carrying ingots.

Then, looking very sheepish and clinking like an old bell-wether because of stolen coin secreted in his clothing, Villiam did the same. Then we all went back and carried ingots. Finally Fred and Monty drove the "shriek" along in front of them, and I climbed up by the carpet with the end of the silken turban tied to me.

By the time we had all come up by that route and had hauled the coin and ingots after us—Villiam simply shedding money as an honest man yields sweat—there was a new crowd assembling in the courtyard, accompanied now by women, and dozens more were pouring in through the main entrance. The "shriek" began haranguing them, but Fred put a hand over his mouth and a knee in the small of his back besides. Then I went into the outer hall for more dynamite, and while I was gone on that errand several shots were fired in our direction by the crowd.

When I returned and flung three sticks at the canopied platform in the center, blowing it to bits, there began a new stampede, but it was still touch and go whether we could make good our escape or not. Those behind, who had not felt the sharp shock or seen men dismembered in a fraction of a second—and especially the women—were disposed to stay and see the matter through.

But Monty took charge again. He tied the "shriek's" hands with the loose end of the turban—drove him in front and set us all to climbing—up along a broken wall that rose like zigzag steps against the sky, to the nearest undamaged roof.

There we left the "shriek" in charge of Villiam, putting that disheveled beachcomber on his honor, for lack of a safer expedient, and returned to carry the plunder, I volleying again with dynamite to create a diversion and gain time. The crowd replied with rifle-fire; so I hurled a stick right into the midst of them, and after that they gave us respite. Carrying that booty was almost the hardest job I ever bent back to, and made worse by the scorching sun and myriads of flies and doubly difficult by reason of precarious foothold.

Having reached the first roof at last with the bullion, Villiam and I were sent back for the rest of the dynamite, and by the time we had that on the roof, Monty had made progress toward one of the four square corner towers. We entered that through one of the windows facing inward, to find ourselves in Rosalie's luxurious quarters that Villiam had described to me before dawn.

There was nobody in there. A huge, stout door made us safe—except for the route along the roof—from anything less than battering-rams. We had dynamite with which to break the roof up if we must, and it was not easy to see how a ram could be swung round the curve of the narrow entrance steps. Short of fire and drought, we could hold out for a week.

Leaving the loads where they were, but driving the "shriek" up in front of us, we emerged on the roof of the tower with a full view at last of the sea, and we all gasped — sighed — filled our lungs — and laughed. Faithful to the last to his fiendish instrument of music, Fred had the concertina tied round his neck with a torn pocket-handkerchief. He would have loosed it and made music there and then, but Monty did not want attention called yet to our whereabouts.

"That ship looks familiar," he said, as we all gazed out across the molten glare.

"Most merchant-ships look alike," Fred answered with a deprecating frown.

"Except to men like us," said Monty, "who have watched ships up and down seven seas. I've seen that ship before."

"So have I," said I.

"I admit it," said Fred.

But we none of us voiced what memory was telling us for fear sight might be playing tricks. He who has seen the Red Sea desert mirage mistrusts eyesight, doubts his ears, has lost taste—because of dreadful food—discredits touch—where nearly all things are too hot to lay a finger on—and

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puts faith only in smell. But smell is overworked! It would have been ridiculous to say we smelled that ship's peculiar aroma. So we all kept still.

NOT so the "shriek" however. He was voluble and no longer in mood to refuse Villiam's service as interpreter. He had not yet got it through his shiny, bone-bald skull that Will and Rosalie had no intention of tempting the ship's captain to destruction on the reef. It was only bit by bit, as question followed question and fact fact, that the horrid realization dawned, not only that Rosalie had run away from Dûm forever, but that the ship would go, too, presently.

Sight of that rich prize so near and yet so far away from clutching fingers saddened him more than the damage we had done his palace and the loss of the marriageable Rosalie. For a while after that he would not talk, until we threatened, unless he did, to go down again and search among the débris in the cavern for things we might have overlooked. That loosed his tongue.

"Where did you get this gold?" demanded Monty, touching the heap of bars.

" 'E says it's ole King Solomon's!" announced Villiam. "'Im what 'ad the million wives and wrote the Bible."

But historical accuracy was not the "shriek's" long suit. As Monty pointed out, gold bars in Solomon's day were not cast in wedge-shaped molds and did not have their weight stamped on each in latter-day Christian figures.

"Where did you get the coins?" asked Monty.

"Got 'em in trade, 'e says."

"What trade does he have with Greece—Peru—China—United States—Italy—Denmark—the Argentine—Guatemala?" asked Monty, picking up gold coins at random.

"Aw—what's the use?" grumbled Villiam. " 'E'll only tell yer them's Solomon's if yer press 'im too 'ard. 'E got 'em out o' the strong-boxes o' ship's captains, that's where the ole crook got 'em from! 'E changes 'em into Maria Theresa dollars whenever 'e gets the chance."

"Ask him about the hole we found the money in," said Monty.

" 'E swears by the Koran that 'ole was made by King Solomon's captains to stow their stuff in while they waited 'ere for camels to come an' carry it away. 'E says it's true by 'is beard and 'is father's honor. It's likely the ole liar means it."

"Ask him how he knows that."

" 'E says the marks the captains made are down there. And when 'is grandfather first fell down the 'ole an' discovered it there was chests and some very old gold."

"Gad!" exclaimed Monty. "I'm antiquarian enough to go down again and see those marks! Who's coming with me?"

But none of us did go. I was positive that minute that I saw a flash like a rifle-shot out at sea, close by the ship that was not at anchor but moving slowly up and down. A minute later we certainly all saw a flash, and then—in one of those strange gaps in the glare that gunners bless and no one understands—we saw the fleet of pirate shore-boats scurrying away like flies.

"D'you suppose Will used some dynamite?"

"Looks mighty like it."

"If it's so—if he's on board, using rifle and dynamite from the ship's deck—then he'll be heading for shore again in half a jiffy!"

"Watch for him," said Monty. "I'll attend to business here. William—pay attention to me, please!"

The first thing he demanded of the "shriek" was all our belongings that had been looted from "the 'ouse near my 'ouse" Rosalie had lent us. The "shriek" promptly denied all knowledge of them, in spite of the fact that he had admitted possession less than an hour ago. Monty sent me down to the room below at once for dynamite and ordered a stick thrown on the roof above the general living-quarters. The "shriek" capitulated before I could throw the stuff and admitted he knew where all our loads were.

"Order them laid outside the wall at the foot of this tower, where I can count them from up here!" ordered Monty. Turning to me he added, "Throw dynamite at the palace without the slightest hesitation if he fails to do as he's told!"

The "shriek" stood accordingly on the edge of the tower, rather like a *muezzin* except for his bare head, and sent out an ululating call that carried like a jackal's—an astonishing, shuddersome shout from such an old man.

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It was answered from below, and then the "shriek" gave his orders, twice repeated, Villiam listening carefully to make sure no treachery was spatchcocked into the conversation. Fifteen minutes later our loads began to be carried on men's heads, and within thirty minutes the last of them lay below us. It was perfectly obvious even from where we were that several of the larger cases had been rifled of their contents, but we had more than sufficient plunder to compensate for that. The guns were there, unsuspected in their white pine boxes, and most of the really valuable things.

"Will's on the way!" said Fred suddenly, peering under cupped hands. "Two boats have left the ship. They're rowing like the devil!"

"Excellent!" Monty rose to his feet. "I'm hungrier than a shark, but we'll not go supperless. Tell him, William, to shout down for women—women, mind—his own harem if he can't get others—to carry those loads to the beach—and what we've got here as well!"

Suspiciously obedient, the "shriek" returned to the edge of the tower and yelled the required commands. He knew what the effect would be. The novelty of the thing—the outrageous impropriety of requiring wives of the faithful to carry loads for foreign unbelievers—brought out men instead of women to crowd around the tower and shout at us. Several bullets, aimed as a hint to the "shriek" to reform his ways, whistled over our heads. One rebellious ruffian pounced on a package of ours and began to make off with it.

"Dynamite!" said Monty, and I flung some, hurling it as far out as possible.

I had the luck to kill nobody and followed it with two more sticks that completed the panic without doing injury. We were left once more masters of the solitude but with neither men nor women to do porterage. The "shriek" looked pleased. He began to suspect a new basis for bargaining and treachery. His were not cavalry tactics.

"Say, you chaps, they're coming like ——!" shouted Fred. "Take a look! Rowing like the royal navy! Can you see through the glare? The shore-craft are giving chase—after 'em like a swarm of flies! Oh God, for a Maxim! Why aren't prayers answered nowadays?"

MONTY turned on the "shriek" and began to introduce that gentleman to what the little British army calls "brute force and bloody ignorance." He crammed the point of a pistol in his ear—seized him by the scrawny neck—shook him—and proceeded to throw a bluff that was pure and without any sort of leg to stand on if it had not worked. But he who can pride himself on keeping more than thirty women in a harem can believe the worst of any one.

"Tell him what I say now, William!"

The nondescript stood close, screwing his face into a frown and thrusting out his jaw, for he sensed they were not to be pleasantries that he would have to render into longshore Arabic.

"His eunuchs and the women of his harem are to carry our loads!"

Villiam himself was shocked by the revolutionary nature of the demand and swallowed twice before he could muster what he deemed a suitably villainous voice.

"He has no time allowed him to decide! He must give the order at once!"

Villiam did that into the argot.

"If he disobeys, he shall see his women dynamited before his eyes!"

Villiam grinned, and the "shriek" winced as that decree went into Arabic. Neither Villiam nor the "shriek" paid Monty the compliment of disbelieving. In fact it was Villiam's faith in the genuineness of the threat that enabled him to convince the victim.

"The whole palace shall be blown up, together with everybody in it!"

The "shriek" began to make motions of submission with his hands, muttering prayers to himself in Arabic.

"But he shall not be killed!" added Monty—inspired for the occasion by the height of our necessity. "He shall live and be taken away with us, to be drowned at sea after shame has had time to gnaw his heart!"

Monty turned away, for he could not keep a straight face. I went to rearranging the remaining heap of dynamite to help Villiam carry conviction.

"The boats are through the gap in the reef!" Fred shouted. "The shore-craft are hot and hard after 'em—all choked together in the gap now—good! Some one's standing in the stern of one boat shooting

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into the mess with a pistol in each hand! Bet you a thousand it's Will! I can see the paddlers falling! Gosh! Did you see that? Did you hear? He flung a stick of dynamite plunk into the middle of the crowded boats—blew a —— of a lot of 'em to Kingdom Come! Good boy, Will! Well done, sir! Well played, America!"

" 'E says please to give 'im back the gold bars and 'is money, sir," said Villiam, removing his ear from the lips of the mumbling "shriek."

Monty made a sign to me. The "shriek" looked up. I took aim very deliberately with a stick of dynamite for the only part of the palace that looked large enough to house thirty women and their attendant maids and eunuchs. The "shriek" held a hand up to prevent me. I made a motion as if to throw. He rose and went to the edge of the tower and began to raise his ululating howl.

After about a minute eunuchs came into the open through a gap in the veranda curtain and listened with gaping incredulity. Not by ten words, or by a thousand, is real revolution brought about in Moslem lands. The authority of custom was stronger than that of the autocratic "shriek." They answered, demanding explanations. Every word of their retort—every second lost was a new spike in our chance of winning free. Monty took the whip hand again.

"You shout to them," he ordered Villiam. "Say that, if orders aren't obeyed before I count a hundred, sticks of dynamite will begin to rain on the roof!"

The eunuchs went in, to confer presumably.

"Lob dynamite into the courtyard by way of hint!" ordered Monty, and I threw one stick that landed beyond the destroyed center platform and scattered sand and stones all over the veranda roof.

That had an instant effect. The same eunuchs ran out and made signals of surrender.

"Tell 'em to march the women out, or we'll do that again and do it nearer," Monty ordered, and Villiam's impudent Cockney voice made the building ring.

They capitulated. Within thirty seconds a woman veiled from crown to heels in dull black emerged into the open, and others followed.

"Shall we take a chance on the main gate?" I asked, wondering how much safety there would be in the dark passage between it and the courtyard.

"Not at all!" said Monty. "This corner is nearest the sea. William, explain to the women that this is to show them what will happen if they're disobedient. Tell 'em nobody 's going to be hurt—yet!"

Villiam explained at length, delighting in the exercise of terrorism pure and simple. Not for nothing had he himself been terrorized for years by the "shriek" and Snoblauch—probably by every Arab in the whole of Dûm—and by Rosalie in her own peculiar way. He was getting a little of his own again. The women shuddered and clung together in a crowd, forgetting jealousies, the eunuchs squatting on the ground between them and the door they had emerged through, to watch and cut off retreat. There were eight eunuchs in all—big, well-fed, burly customers with eye and attitude that sang aloud of license—intrigue—lust.

"Now make a hole through the wall below!" Monty ordered. "No, not that side—you'll cover our loads with débris. That's better!"

But it isn't so easy as it sounds to make a practicable passage through a wall of rock and plaster with sticks of dynamite thrown at an angle from an elevation. I wasted six sticks before the seventh made a gap in the proper place, and then it required three more, thrown very carefully, to finish the task and clear a passage from the courtyard to the open.

By this time the women, grown indifferent to the noise, were all agog with excitement, standing on tiptoe to see the effect and laughing in shrill chorus when extra large lumps of stone and roofing stuff were hurled toward them. The "shriek" was frantic, grieving for his property; the eunuchs were frankly afraid; the women enjoyed the spectacle. They marched forward at the word of command over the débris and through the gap, not, it is true, as their European sisters might have done in semi-military fashion, but giggling—squealing like schoolgirls—higgledy-piggledy—anyhow—three-parts scared out of their skins—wholly excited—having the time of their lives and not at all too careful of the law that decrees no woman shall let her face be seen by strangers.

We were able to form a very poor opinion of the "shriek's" taste. With all those

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Red Sea ports to raid and batter in and all Dûm for his own, he had picked for himself the ugliest swarm of shrews that ever a prophet's faithful follower kept under lock and key!

THE minute they were through the gap and looking in consternation at the loads they were to carry—for the "shriek's" harem did not have to carry water and grow muscular like ordinary Dûm drabs—we started down the tower one by one, carrying armfuls of booty—gold coin tied into bags made from sections of the "shriek's" silk turban—gold bars done up in the same way—and last and not least, dynamite.

Fred was the last to come, driving the "shriek" in front of him—for we did not dare leave the ruler of Dûm behind us to reassert lost prestige with his townsmen and contrive our undoing at the last.

"The boats are close inshore now!" Fred shouted. "There's a crowd running down to the beach to receive them, and the canoes are scarcely a quarter of a mile behind! We're all done for if we don't hurry!"

And who could make women hurry, whose only training was in laziness and coquetry? Even the eunuchs, driven to the peak of frenzy by fear of Monty's pistol and the feel of Monty's toe in their fat "behimes," could not persuade them to pick up the loads one by one and walk with them. They had to cackle and giggle and argue and pretend they couldn't and declare they wouldn't and waste more time than if the fight on the beach would take place tomorrow and today was holiday. We could have carried loads ourselves and abandoned everything but the gold and dynamite, but for wanting both hands free.

Finally it was Fred who thought of the solution. He tied what was left of the "shriek's" turban round the old rascal's neck and threatened to hang him to a beam that stuck out from the shattered wall unless the women went to work at once. And, if they didn't love their old tyrant, at least they looked to him for luxuries. When Fred had made the threat in pure Arabic and Villiam had rendered it impurely but more intelligibly, they screamed and made haste at once.

Once on the way they showed speed and stamina far beyond anything we had hoped. We abandoned the biggest, heaviest cases because those had been looted of some of their contents. Some of what were left weighed sixty pounds, but we made the fat eunuchs shoulder those. And we only had to halt three times between the palace and the beach, where we could hear Will's pistols cracking busily.

The two boats, with only four rowers in each, were lying off-shore at exactly that point where the undertow balanced the on-shore current and established equilibrium, the oars dipping once and again to keep position. Behind them, trying to dodge Will's pistols, thirty or forty native boats formed a screen that cut off retreat toward the ship. And on the beach practically the whole of Dûm waited with something almost like patience until they should be forced to land.

In spite of the din we had made destroying walls and the surely obvious fact that the boats had come to establish communication with us, our arrival from the rear was a complete surprize. What that town of sea-robbers lacked was generalship. Perhaps we had their only general prisoner!

It would not have been generalship to wait for their attack. We took the risk of the women stampeding—picked a place in the crowd where men—and only men—seemed to stand thickest—and fired, all four of us, Monty, Fred, Villiam and I, lobbing sticks of dynamite in swift succession that blasted a hole a company of camels could have marched through in open order. There was panic—prompt and dire. All but the women and the children, who watched from a little distance, took to their heels and fled.

Will hailed us with a glad yell from the nearest boat and shouted instructions we could not catch. We expected our women to have bolted, but the harem beauties proved to be of sterner stuff and went forward with their burdens, down between the ghastly mangled fragments of the victims of our dynamite, with little else than curiosity. Blood and viscera spread on the sand did not trouble them one iota.

It was the "shriek" who bolted. Villiam yelled too late to warn us. The old rascal doubled back like a rabbit at our first shot—ducked low—crawled along a sand furrow for fifty yards as swiftly as a hunting snake and then took to his heels toward

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the town. I could have hit him with the rifle, but, as Monty said:

"What's the use? We've taken toll of him!"

I wished I had shot him, though, within ten minutes. He reached the street and rallied his followers. Then, utterly regardless of the safety of his wives, whom he thought perhaps defiled by our use of them as porters, he opened a scattering fire on us. One wife was hit in the foot, and a eunuch was shot dead.

We let the wives go—made them throw down the loads and sent them running toward the palace to be out of harm's way. Then Villiam and I made a shelter of bags and boxes, and I lay down behind it to return the fire while the others waded waist-deep through the treacherous undertow and carried first the loot and then our own things to the boats. For they did not dare bring the boats inshore for fear of their turning turtle on the beach.

By the time they had everything on board the boats—except a few loads dropped into the sea and not recoverable in that state of haste—and they had begun yelling for me to make haste and wade out to them, the "shriek's" men had summoned courage sufficient to attempt a rush. They came charging down on the beach a hundred strong, brandishing spears and some of them firing long-barreled rifles as they ran.

In my hurry I dropped a dozen sticks of dynamite in one place on the sand, and could not stop to pick them up. As I jumped into Will's boat, they were pounced on.

"Now we're done for!" said I.

BUT Will had one shot left in one pistol. Monty held a stick of dynamite, by some miracle not lost overboard or exploded in the hurry. Pistol-shot followed missile as with one thought and landed simultaneously, leaving doubt as to which had detonated the twelve sticks on the sand—but very little else in that near neighborhood! The shock of the explosion knocked me back head over heels into the water, where I was sucked under by the ground-swell and would have been drowned but for Monty's strong arms and a most infernally sharp boat-hook that left a scar in my left side that I wear today in memory of it and him.

They kept up the shooting from the beach, but their aim was rotten. One of the rowers had his knuckles barked, and there were several holes in both boats, but there was no serious damage done. Will's ammunition was gone, but I had plenty for the rifle, and, being hungry, weary and wet, I passed the weapon to him. In between potting at the fleet of small craft that fought with rashness that did their crews' courage credit but not their wit, he told us what had been happening at his end.

"You noticed the name on the bow of the boats?"

"Sure. *Jean Marie!* How did she come to turn back?"

The crews who manned the oars and the bearded third mate in the other boat had nodded to us like old friends. Headed for a rusty-plated tramp that we had left the day before with sighs of thankfulness, we felt like wanderers coming home again.

"It's the queerest tale ever you heard! Look out! Those three boats on the right are coming for us all together! See—they've lashed 'em side to side like a raft!"

"Hand me a stick of dynamite," said Monty grimly. "There! That settled 'em, I think. William, you take the rest of the dynamite and repel boarders! Continue the story, Will."

"Well—we'd no sooner left the ship and she was under weigh again than the first mate—you recall he was a stoutish, rather elderly, bearded man—went to the skipper and questioned him about things he'd overheard us say but particularly about things he thought he'd heard the captain say to us.

"Seems when he was in Cochin China years ago his wife and little daughter were to come out and live with him but were shipwrecked in the Red Sea. He was never able to get near the scene of the wreck—poor man, you know—had to go where ships' owners sent him, but he heard rumors, and one was that a little French girl and her mother had been made prisoners by the coast Arabs.

"Then he heard another story, to the effect that there was a European merchant at this place, who could be reached by mail once in three months or so by way of Constantinople. Name of merchant—Snoblauch, if you please!

"So he wrote to this man, Snoblauch, to ask if the story about the woman and the child

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were true, stating that the woman was his wife and the child his daughter and promising on receipt of a reply in the affirmative either to come to Dûm in person or persuade his Government to send a cruiser to bring the women away.

"What do you suppose friend Snoblauch does? I've seen the letter. He wrote back after thinking the thing over for a month or two and said there was no truth whatever in the story: that there was no white woman and no white child in Dûm, nor ever had been! Consider the old beast? What d'you know about him, eh? So full of his own scheme to marry the girl to a Bedouin chief that he sent that heartless lie to her father!

"Well—talk led to talk, and one thing led to another until the captain had told the story he told us about delivering goods to the rather faded mother, and they were both sure to the point of conviction that mother and girl would still be found in Dûm. They piled on the weight of argument by letting 'emselves get nervous on our account. And then the captain figured that we were generous sort of men who'd settle up with the owners for extra coal and time lost and so on. So they steamed back, and here we are!"

"And where's Rosalie?"

"In the arms of papa!"

"Recognize him?"

"Of course not. But she's crazy about him—simply crazy. Dotes on his whiskers and fat stomach and blue uniform. She has cultivated the Arab standards of beauty, you know."

"So you're left in the cold, are you?"

He made a wry face.

"She has told pop she means to marry me at once!" he answered.

We left the disheartened crews of the longshore boats behind, but one canoe—or rather ship's boat driven by paddles—approached us at an angle and persisted, reaching the steamer abreast of us. Two hundred yards before we came within hailing distance we knew it was Snoblauch perched in the stern with his feet on luggage and his European tweeds put on tidily.

"Where are your wives?" Monty called to him, as he bade his paddlers wait and let us up the companion-ladder first.

"Oh, I leaf zem! Zey are nozzing but safages! Zey vill find zemselfs anozzer hosband! It is nozzing. Later I explain to you on board the ship."

"Of course you will!" Will Yerkes stood on a thwart and shouted. "Mr. Anatole Molyneux! Oh, Mr. Molyneux!"

The hairy first mate put head and shoulders over the bridge rail.

"This is Herr Snoblauch of Dûm, who wrote you that letter! Mr. Snoblauch, this is Mr. Anatole Molyneux, father of Rosalie Molyneux, first mate of this steamer. Won't you step aboard?"

"*Venez, mo'sieur!*" said the Frenchman, leaning over. "*Je suis prêt!*"

An impudent and very lovely girl's face thrust itself past his and spat three times in swift succession.

"Go back to your vifes, an' zey comb your 'air, ole Germanee sausage!" she shouted.

And Snoblauch went, sixteen to the dozen, screaming at the paddlers to take him swiftly out of rifle-range.

VIII

THE tramp-steamer *Jean Marie*, with trembling boilers and every loose gadget on her rattling like a brass band, accomplished seven full knots northwestward toward Suez, and the grim east coast of the Red Sea faded in the glare. She knew a new régime at last, that old frequenter of half-forgotten ports. There was brand-new life on board her; thought was all of whimsicality, and, because the French lack reverence for Mrs. Grundy, to speak was to laugh.

Outrageously attired in Turkish trousers, and little blue Morocco slippers on bare feet, with odds and ends of shore-going frippery looted from drawers and chests to complete the array, Rosalie danced on the deck, swearing in awful detail in coast Arabic whenever the fancy seized her, but for the most part making jokes.

Villiam—down on the ship's papers now as "Mr. William Hodges, passenger, rescued at sea"—sat a great deal alone and puzzled over gold coins that he extracted from various folds of a dirty old pair of baggy trousers. He still wore a fez at an impudent angle, but Monty had given him the "suit o' Europe reach-me-downs" his heart desired, and now the old beach-combing clothes were luggage.

"Mister," he asked me on the morning of

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the first day out. "'As the price o' public 'ouses riz since Hi left 'ome? Can a man still take a nice little pub in the country who's got a couple o' hundred to 'is name? If that's so, Hi means to 'ave one!"

"What 'll you call it?" I asked. "The Shriek of Dûm?"

"No, guv'nor! No; you're laughing at me. I ain't joking. I'm going to 'ave a little dinky public 'ouse and call it 'Roses on the Lee' in mem'ry o' her once kissing me! Can't you see it—nice, pretty sign-board—picture of a rosebush—red roses on it all ablooming—underneath in big black letters, William 'Odges, Proprietor! Blimy! Can't they make this 'ooker crawl faster? I'm in a 'urry!"

So much for Villiam. Each to his taste, and water to its level. Rosalie was not such an easy problem, nor her ambitions so easy to fulfil. We held a consultation about her in the unspeakably stuffy cabin next the chart-house, while the second mate stood watch so that the skipper and first could both be present. She herself superintended and passed remarks through the open window, smoking a cigaret and dividing her attentions between Pop Molyneux and Will.

One thing was extremely easy to decide. Including bullion and gold coins we had brought away with us a capital sum sufficient, when carefully invested, to make her extremely well off from the standpoint of a young, unmarried woman.

"What diff'rence zat make?" she demanded. "Vill Yerkes he marry me an' take all back!"

It really looked very serious for Will. Pop Molyneux—ridiculously proud of the girl and satisfied with her "dot," as only a thrifty French papa knows how to be, but scared to death of the prospect of taking care of her ashore—was lavish of his praise of Will and all in favor of the match. It never entered Rosalie's head that Will might prefer to choose his own mate or that he might balk at the prospect of marrying an orphan rescued from a Red Sea beach. And he was much too fine a chap to hurt her feelings.

From joking about him, poking fun at him and taking imaginary strolls with him and his bride down Bond Street, in the Bois, or up Fifth Avenue, we began to share his gloom. It was not until we passed through the Suez Canal and all took train with Pa Molyneux and Rosalie to Alexandria to buy her Christian clothing, while the *Jean Marie* took on coal and waited for orders, that Rosalie herself found the only true solution of it all.

Will is a presentable young chap. If it were not that his ears stick out he would be handsomer than ninety-nine men out of any hundred. And because Fred, who was born into fine society but loathes it, never can be induced to do anything conventional in cities and because it fell to my lot to hunt with Pop Molyneux and Rosalie among the shops—the money not being settled on her yet, and Molyneux himself greatly admiring our persistence in overseeing expenditures until proper legal papers had been drawn and signed—it followed that Monty and Will went about a great deal together and were seen in the hotel together at all hours of the day.

They were altogether too good-looking to escape recognition. Monty had not signed his proper name and title on the hotel-register, but it was only a matter of hours before Mrs. John Calvert sent her servant with an invitation to take tea in her room and bring his friend. And all the world knows who she is. Not royalty refuses when she invites.

She took quite a fancy to Will. Women do, especially the women who have been and seen and who have successful grown-up sons. By the second day he was riding in her carriage, and that evening at dinner, she being what she is and knowing half the honorable secrets of more cabinets than one, he had unbosomed himself to her about the whole business.

"Bring the girl to me. Let me see her," was the only comment.

We had been keeping Rosalie in a private room and taking her about in hooded carriages, for obvious reasons.

So Rosalie was produced and left with Mrs. John Calvert, who had nothing particular to do just then because her husband was up the Nile making treaties with unknown tribes or some such matter. In an hour Rosalie was her sworn slave. Within a day the whole process of acquiring a wardrobe had been rearranged, with Mrs. John Calvert in charge and Mrs. Calvert's private carriage taking the place of our beastly, stuffy, hooded, hired victorias.

Once made presentable—and, heavens, what a change it was—Rosalie was taken to

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call on interesting folk, with that astonishing story of hers to tell and her naive manners—or lack of them—to make her entertaining. In that way she met some of the nicest people—French as well as British—in Alexandria.

It was on the fifth, or the sixth day, that she confronted Monty and me and Will in the hotel lobby. We had been strolling. Fred was making concertina music to three steamer-captains, Pa Molyneux, a fat policeman and a Chinese mandarin in the red room up-stairs at Bill's—and, if you never heard of Bill's, it's time you traveled. Rosalie had just come in from driving with Mrs. Calvert and was looking lovely in her new dress with dark red roses at her waist.

"I no marry you!" she told Will frankly.

"Why?" he had the nerve to ask.

"Oh, because! I 'ave seen too many ozzer ladies. You should 'ave a lady like zem—like zis one, Madame Calvert! I no marry you! I go to school! I learn! Madame Calvert, she is arranging everyzing. By and by, maybe I forget you!"

"I hope not!" we all answered fervently.

At that she kissed us each in full view of every one in the lobby. Mrs. Calvert looking away to hide tears or laughter, I don't know which.

"I never forget you—none of you—never! I love you all always! But now I am one voman! One year more—two year more—and I know not now what I choose zen! Tell Papa Molyneux I go viz Madame Calvert! Tell 'im come say me good-by!"

BUFFALO BILL RIDES WITH CUSTER

BY E. A. BRININSTOOL

IT WAS in 1868 that Buffalo Bill had his first experience with General Custer. It came in the shape of a very amusing ride which Cody made as a guide for the gallant leader of the Seventh Cavalry.

Cody was scouting in the vicinity of Fort Hays, when Custer appeared at the post one morning with an escort of ten soldiers. He was *en route* to Fort Larned, sixty-five miles distant, and Cody was ordered by the commander of Fort Hays to act as guide for the general.

Early the next morning, having been told by Custer the previous night that he desired to start at sunup, Buffalo Bill was on hand. He was mounted on a large mouse-colored mule when Custer and his escort appeared.

"My man, you'll never in the world be able to keep up with me on that critter," exclaimed Custer in disgust.

Cody grinned.

"Never you mind this mule, General," he laughed. "I'll guarantee he will get there fast enough to suit you."

"Well," responded Custer impatiently, "you know what he can do better than I do, but he don't look good to me."

The party started. Custer was mounted on a fiery thoroughbred, and for the first fifteen miles it was all Cody could do to keep his mule in advance of the Custer outfit. The general berated Cody's mount in sarcastic words, asserting that the scout should have known enough to ride a good horse. Cody made no further remarks, but after crossing the Smoky Hill River he began "letting out" the mule, who was rapidly getting his second wind.

Soon the animal was outdistancing the horses, and Custer began to look askance at his escort, which was lagging behind. His own thoroughbred, also, was beginning to show signs of distress, but the mule steadily forged ahead to such an extent that Cody was often far in advance of the general and would be obliged to wait for him.

Cody's eyes began to twinkle, and at last, having waited in one place for several minutes for Custer, he casually remarked as the general and his panting horse appeared:

"Well, General, how about this 'ere mule of mine, anyhow?"

"Cody," replied General Custer, "you have a far better vehicle than I thought."

From that time on for the balance of the sixty-five miles, Cody had no difficulty in keeping far ahead of the others, and, when he rode into Fort Larned about four o'clock that afternoon, the Custer party were a considerable distance in the rear.

This was the beginning of Cody's acquaintance with Custer, who was greatly pleased with his new guide, and arrangements were there made for a scouting trip that Summer with the Seventh Cavalry.

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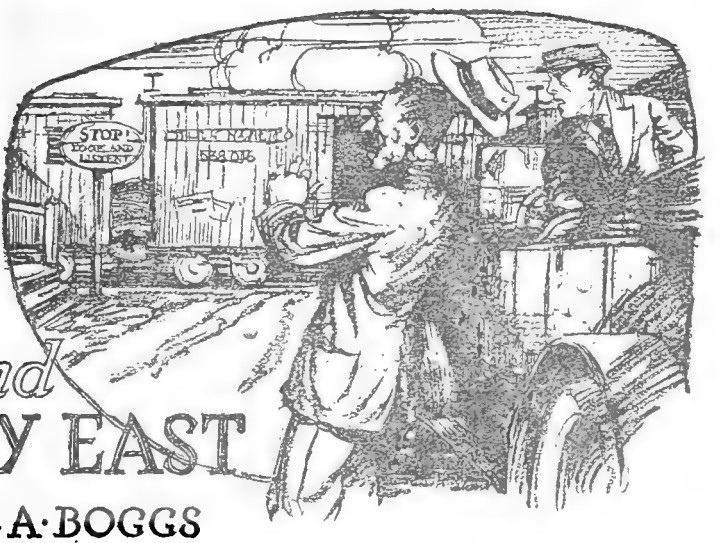

The WILD and WOOLLY EAST

by RUSSELL A. BOGGS

Author of "Dan Kurrie's Inning;" "Agent Andy," etc.

"IF YOU do go East," said Uncle Cass Calloway, of the Double C ranch, "you take a gun along. I been reading in the papers about back there, and you take my word it's no place for an unprotected innocent like you."

Clint Kyle, agent at Griggs, Wyoming, for the W. P. & I. railroad, laughed.

"What've you been reading now, Uncle Cass?" he asked.

"I been reading enough," replied the grizzled Double C man, "and, from what I can gather, them cities back there's full of gunmen that's so low-down they'll hire out at about six-bits an hour per head—and guarantee to pot any designated person offhand, regardless of the person's fame or fortune. And hold-ups! Say, they don't seem to think any more of sticking a citizen up on the main street in broad daylight and taking his roll than they do of taking a highball! I'll be dog-goned if it ain't fierce. Robbin' and shootin' and stabbin', mayhem and murder—columns and columns of it!"

Young Clint chuckled merrily.

"Oh, shucks, Uncle Cass! That's all overdrawn stuff. And anyway, even if it isn't, it's just part of what goes on there."

Uncle Cass—everybody in that country called him that—shook his head.

"If that's just part of it," he said stubbornly, "I'll be danged if the whole thing must not be a holy terror! You listen to my advice and take a gun along."

"Haven't any," demurred Clint. "Got hard up about a year ago and sold the one I had."

"Then I'll lend you one," said Calloway. "I got a couple good ones out home; I'll bring one in tomorrow."

"Well," assented Clint, smiling affectionately at old Uncle Cass, "if you feel so strong about it, why, bring the weapon in. I'll take it."

Sure enough, the following day Uncle Cass came back to town. He entered the little depot office and produced a pistol—a long, heavy .45. He handed it and a box of cartridges to Kyle.

"You used to be right handy with one of these," he said to Clint. "Wonder if you still are?" He looked around the office and spied a rusty tin cup hanging by the rear window. "This any good?"

"No," answered Clint, examining the gun.

"Then fill that .45 up," directed Calloway, "and come outside. We'll see."

They went out, and the older man placed the empty tin cup between the tracks.

"Keep 'er rollin'!" he said.

Standing at the waiting-room doorway, Clint raised the pistol and fired six times. At the first shot the cup moved, and when the last shot was fired it was still moving.

"Very nice," observed Uncle Cass, bobbing his head in approval. "Now you be sure and take that gun along. I'll feel better while you're away."

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SO THAT is how it came about that, when he went East, Clint Kyle took a big .45 along—took it to humor his old friend, Uncle Cass Calloway. Clint had never been East, and this October he'd been taken with a sudden desire to visit that part of the country and look it over. He had no intentions of staying there—merely wanted a change and a chance to see some new country.

It was his plan to stop off first in Pennsylvania or New York, or some other one of the near-by states and look for a job good for a few months. Then along about December he thought he might work down along the Atlantic coast to the South and stay there for the cold months. Then, in the Spring, back to Wyoming. This was his plan.

Six days after his target practise with Uncle Cass, Clint reached the foot-hills of the Alleghanies. He dropped off the train at Negley Junction, headquarters for the Middle Division of the P. & N., the conductor having told him there was a possibility of landing a job there. An hour later he was seated in the office of Superitendent Lanier.

"Why, yes," said Lanier, after Clint had made his application and given proof of his ability, "I believe we can fix you up. There's Agent Fleming out at Redford wants off for a few months. You might go there. How does it strike you?"

"Fine," answered Kyle.

"All right, we'll call it a go," said Lanier. "I'll give you a pass. You call there next Monday and take charge."

"Very good," said Kyle, and shortly after he departed.

It was not until a half hour later that Superintendent Lanier thought of something. He raised his eyes from the report that he had been studying.

"I wonder," he said meditatively, "if I shouldn't have warned that young fellow about 'Blacky' Snell?"

II

HE WAS known from end to end of the Middle Division as the conductor who packed a gun. Big, strong-voiced, with a frowning, forbidding face, Blacky Snell, conductor of one of the division's two local freights, was regarded by many men with trepidation, but with affection by none.

He held his crew down hard, ruling with an iron hand. The result was that trainmen of ordinary self-respect would not work with him but at the first opportunity would transfer to some other run. By this process of elimination Snell at last got a crew much like himself—and they stuck. "A hard bunch" was the description the division had for them.

The butt of the gun he carried could always be seen peeping out of the side flap of the faded blue overalls that Snell wore when on duty. It was a short-barreled, big-calibered revolver of the bulldog type. In this Eastern country where the P. & N. was located habitual visible gun-carrying was an oddity, the very unusualness of the thing giving weight to the uneasiness with which Snell was regarded and adding to his reputation of being a bad man to monkey with.

Indeed, it was whispered that Snell once had actually shot a train-rider who failed to hit the cinders as promptly as the conductor thought he should. True, no person seemed to have actual proof of this occurrence, but Snell's crew let it be understood by certain vague intimations that there was something in it—while Blacky himself, when the thing was mentioned, would only scowl fiercely, conveying to those present a conviction that, while the shooting must be true, they'd better not press the matter or something unpleasant might happen to them, too. Anyway, it was true beyond question that Snell was never backward about pulling his gun when his authority or wishes threatened to be crossed, and about shooting off strong words—if not the weapon.

The fact that those he threatened were never themselves armed may or may not have influenced the conductor in his pistol-pulling—but a lot of folks on the division wondered about it, and, as the months went by and Blacky grew more and more arrogant in manner and gun-flourishing, some of them began to get extremely nervous. It was only a question of time, they believed, until Snell actually would shoot somebody—and it would be a shooting about which there'd be no doubt.

As there was no telling who among those he came in contact with it would be, the folks along the line naturally became more and more anxious. They began to wish, fervently, that Snell could be gotten rid of in some way—or that at least some one

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would some day rise and take a proper fall out of the loud-mouthed conductor and put him in his place.

The small town of Redford lies just five miles east of Negley Junction. As the east-bound local freight each week-day left the Negley Junction yards promptly at 7 A.M., its arrival at Redford—the first stop east—invariably was at the same time each day—at about seven-twenty in the morning.

It happened also that westbound passen-ger-train No. 131 was due at Redford at 7:20 A.M.—the local and 131 thus usually managing to get there together, giving the agent about all he wanted to handle for the time being. The passenger-train, of course, took precedence, and the agent always was compelled to abandon the local, leaving the crew to do their freight-handling and switching with the agent's watchful eye absent until after No. 131's departure, and, even after 131 had gone, there always were a couple of sacks of mail to be lugged to the post-office—this further delaying his observations of the local's activities.

On Monday, the first day of Clint Kyle's new duties as agent at Redford, Conductor Snell and his crew arrived on the local promptly at seven-twenty. Snell stared aggressively at the young chap who handed him a bundle of way-bills.

"So you're the fellow that's taking Fleming's place, are you?" said the con-ductor loudly.

"Why, yes," returned Clint evenly.

"The ——!" said Blacky and jerked open the packet of bills.

Clint looked mildly surprized at this gruff greeting. But just then No. 131 came rolling around the curve.

"The freight house is open," he said to the conductor. "You'll find all that stuff in there."

It was almost ten minutes later when Kyle got back to the station after having delivered the mail at the post-office. No. 131, of course, was gone—and the local was just going. Clint took a quick look at the siding. No switching had been done—the local was moving off without carrying out the instructions he had given Snell on the switch-list!

"Then he's that kind of conductor!" said Clint to himself. "One of these boys who don't do their work if there's any way of sliding out of it!" He scratched his head reflectively. "Well, we'll see."

It was about three o'clock that afternoon when the other local freight—the west-bound one—arrived. After the freight had been unloaded, Kyle drew the conductor, Cleary, to one side.

"What sort of a fellow is this Conductor Snell, anyway?" he asked.

Now the rivalry between Snell's local and Cleary's local was deeper and more bitter than the usual deep rivalry between locals is apt to be. When Snell shirked his work, it meant that Cleary, when he came along next day, would have to do what had been neglected. Consequently Cleary was not reluctant about speaking in answer to Kyle's question.

"The ——est skunk that ever swung a lantern!" said Cleary promptly. "What's he been doing?"

"Ran away this morning and didn't do his switching," explained Clint.

"That's him!" grunted Cleary. "Sees you're a new man and thinks he can get away with it."

"All right—thanks," said Clint. "I just wanted to make sure."

"Watch that gun of his," warned Cleary. "He likes to sling it around."

"I thought that was a gun I saw on him," said Clint. "All right, I'll watch it."

The following afternoon Snell's local, westbound this time, arrived at Redford in a great hurry—with but a few pieces of freight to put off. But Agent Clint ignored their obvious desire to be away speedily. He confronted Conductor Snell.

"Why didn't you do that switching yesterday morning?" he demanded.

Blacky scowled in what was meant for deep surprize.

"What switching?" he growled.

"The switching my switch-list called for," said Kyle.

"Didn't get any blasted switch-list!" declared Snell.

He thrust his jaw out belligerently.

"You did get a switch-list," asserted Clint, "and it was a perfectly good one—sticking in with that bunch of way-bills I gave you."

"It wasn't there," lied Blacky, angry because he couldn't seem to overawe this new agent.

"It was there," said Clint, his eyes resting steadily on the fuming conductor. "That's old stuff, Snell—and don't let it happen again."

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He turned sharply on his heel and walked toward the station.

As Clint turned away, he perceived the conductor's hand move toward the butt of the pistol that peeped out of Snell's overalls. At the same time something between a bellow and a snort came from the conductor's lips. But Clint never even paused or looked back—merely walked quietly to the depot and stepped into the waiting-room doorway.

Blacky, his pistol half-drawn, stood staring. This obstacle he had run up against, this agent, was something different. But, before the conductor could figure it out, the local's whistle tooted sharply, and the train began to pull out, the flagman having come in and given the go-ahead signal.

Snell shoved his pistol back to its place, turned and climbed aboard the caboose.

III

ON WEDNESDAY morning Snell's eastbound local and No. 131 reached Redford as per schedule, the passenger-train drifting in a moment after the freight arrived. It happened that morning there was no switching to be done, although Kyle had some freight for the local to load. He barely had time to open the freight house door and hand the scowling Snell and his surly crew their way-bills before No. 131 came.

When Clint returned to the station after his trip to the post-office with the mail bags, he found that the local crew had loaded the shipments he had for them and were now finishing up their unloading, thrusting into the wareroom the last articles of freight destined to Redford—tossing the things in with a certain vicious, reckless abandon, as if utterly oblivious to where the articles went or to any damage that might be done.

As Kyle came to the wareroom, the car door was banged shut.

"Give the sign—call the flag!" Snell instructed his men.

Clint cast one glance in at the open freight room door. Within was a huge heap of merchandise—bags of sugar, boxes of canned goods, kegs of paint, step-ladders, a few chairs, a table, bundles of baskets, several wheelbarrows—all tossed together in utter confusion. One glance was enough for Clint. A peculiar hardness came into his level eyes.

"Just a minute!" He called to Snell before the signal to whistle in the flagman could be given.

"What in thunder's wrong now?" snapped Blacky, glaring.

"That pile of freight," said Kyle quietly. "You'll have to straighten it out before you leave."

"I'll straighten out ——!" cried Snell. "Call the flag!"

This last was addressed to his brakemen.

"I don't know whether you'll ever straighten out that place or not," said Clint, still evenly. "But I do know you'll straighten out this place—and do it before you leave!"

"What!" roared Blacky.

His ever-willing right hand reached down. He drew out his short-barreled revolver and held it half raised.

"Now!" he cried threateningly. "Will you shut up?"

For about a half second Clint Kyle's calm eye rested quizzically on the pistol. Then, so swiftly that one could scarcely credit it, his own right hand brushed his coat—was extended. And, when it was extended, there was a big, heavy .45 in it—a pistol that made Snell's sawed-off gun look like a toy in comparison. Moreover the barrel of the .45 was not merely half raised; it was altogether raised, parallel with the ground, the point of it aimed faultlessly at Conductor Snell's left eye.

"That's not the way, Snell," said Clint to the gasping Blacky, while Blacky's crew stared on in helpless bewilderment. "That's not the way at all. When you draw on a man, you want to draw completely—draw and cover him all in one move. Man, there's lots of places where, if you'd tried what you did just now, you'd have been a dead one for at least the last five seconds."

Kyle extended his left hand.

"Just give that little implement of yours a toss," he instructed. "I want to look it over."

Snell never hesitated. He gave his pistol a little pitch, and it fell near Clint's feet. The agent stooped and picked it up. He smiled.

"Another point," he said. "This gun of yours is not the kind. Too short. You can't hold it down right. You want something more like this one of mine. Watch!"

He flipped his .45 carelessly in the direction of a box car in the local freight and

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planted four quick shots in a small figure eight thereon—two shots in the upper loop of the figure and two in the lower, neither of the loops being over an inch in diameter.

"That's nothing to brag about, of course," went on Clint. "But it just goes to show you can put 'em about where you want 'em when you've got a proper pistol. Now I'll try this one of yours."

He raised Snell's short gun and banged away at another figure eight of the same dimensions as the first one. One of the shots hit the upper loop, but the other three all were outside the figure—none of them over an inch, however.

"You see!" said Clint. "There it is. Now those couple of inches might mean just the difference between life and death—probably would if the other fellow shooting was a good man."

He tossed the short pistol back to Snell.

"Do you get my meaning?" he asked.

Blacky's fierceness and bluster had by this time largely disappeared—though his eyes betrayed the vain wrath that gorged his breast.

"Y-Yes," he mumbled.

"Still," said Clint musingly, "you understand that's merely my advice. If you still feel that you'd maybe like to shoot me with that gun of yours, why, I'll tell you what let's do. We'll do like they used to do out in my country; we'll have a shoot-on-sight affair. You'll stay on this side the freight house and I'll go round back. Then we'll start looking for each other, and, as soon as you see me or I see you, we'll start shooting. What do you say?"

Snell swallowed hard at least three times. He moistened his lips and nervously shoved his pistol back under his overalls.

"N-no—I guess not," he finally managed to stutter.

"Not?" said Clint amiably. "Well, all right—just as you say."

He seemed struck with another idea.

"Hold on, though!" he said quickly. "Maybe you'd rather try it with my gun. Here, you take it, and I'll take yours." He offered his .45.

But Snell drew back, his eyes shifting swiftly to the bullet holes around the two eights on the box car.

"Oh, forget it," he muttered, his face crimson with shame and rage.

Kyle slowly shoved his .45 back under his coat.

"Well," he said, "then how about straightening out this pile of freight?"

The conductor turned on his silent brakemen, his face working. He had to have something for his wrath to burst on, and his crew served the purpose.

"Get in there and sort out that stuff!" he bellowed.

IV

THURSDAY was a typical Indian Summer day—warm, windless, the sun mellow in a hazy blue sky. Redford dozed tranquilly, its one main street seemingly deserted of all traffic, although an occasional pedestrian did move about. At the depot business was dull, and by noon Agent Clint Kyle had his daily forms pretty well lined up.

The main street of Redford runs north and south, crossing the double tracks of the P. & N. at the southern edge of town. Indeed, to the south it was the single highway out of town, it being the one street with a grade crossing over the tracks.

The depot was located on this highway, probably two hundred yards from the center of the town's chief activities, where, on the four corners made by the main street and an intersecting side street, were clustered the hotel, the post-office, a general store and the Redford Bank. This latter, located in a two-story brick building, had an office force of but two men—Simmons, the cashier, and Burnap, his assistant.

An afternoon passenger-train from the East was due at Redford shortly after one o'clock. Not long after its departure this Thursday afternoon Cashier Simmons, of the bank, dropped in at the station.

"Did you get a package for us on the one o'clock train?" he inquired of Kyle.

"Yes," answered Clint, and, rising from his desk, he produced a package sealed with much red wax and shoved it out the ticket window. It was a package of currency, marked six thousand dollars. "This is the one you're wanting, I expect."

"That's it," stated Simmons.

He signed the express book, took the package and departed for the bank.

IT WAS drawing on toward three o'clock when from the north a big automobile rolled swiftly into Redford—a touring-car in which rode three men, the driver alone in the front seat, the other two men in the rear.

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Without delay or hesitation the car approached the corner on which stood the bank, drew up to the curb and stopped. It happened that at that moment the street was absolutely deserted; not a person was in sight.

The two men in the rear of the machine stepped out quickly and entered the bank, the taller man in the lead, the shorter man following with a black-leather satchel in his left hand. The driver remained in his seat, shutting down his motor to a gentle purr.

As the two entered the bank, they perceived that no patrons were about. Inside the cage Simmons and Burnap alone were visible, bending over their books.

Simmons, at the front window of the cage, looked up as a step sounded in the doorway. He found himself gazing into the steady muzzle of an automatic pistol held in the right hand of the taller of the two strangers who entered.

"Up with your hands!" said the taller stranger. "Put 'em up—quick!"

His voice was snapping, dangerous.

Simmons gave a sort of gasp of dismay and did as ordered. Considering that the unwavering point of the automatic was a scant six feet from his head, it doubtless was the wise thing to do.

The shorter man, also with a pistol in hand, meantime had covered the cashier's assistant, Burnap.

"You, too!" the second man instructed the assistant.

And the astounded Burnap did as Simmons had done; his hands went up.

The action that followed was short and swift—but highly efficient.

At the direction of the man with the satchel, Burnap tremblingly unlocked the door of the cage. The shorter stranger then entered the cage, his companion remaining without with pistol thrust between the brass bars of the window, covering the two bank employees. With things thus set, the man who had gone into the cage at once entered the open doors of the vault at the rear, his satchel in hand.

It was but a few minutes later when the man emerged from the vault. As the stranger came out, the cashier perceived from the corner of his eye that the bandit was stuffing into the satchel the six-thousand-dollar package of money that Simmons had but shortly brought from the depot. Simmons cursed the luck that the bandits should strike them on the very day the package had come. There had been, he knew, close to nine thousand dollars in other cash in the vault. If the bandit had found all of it, the total haul would be close to fifteen thousand. The cashier groaned inwardly.

"Now then, you two," began the man with the satchel as he came out, "get in the vault. I'll just tie you up there for safe——"

He doubtless meant to say "for safe-keeping"—but he never got that far. Outside, the motor of their car suddenly let out a roar. Apparently that was a signal of approaching danger, for, without waiting to put Simmons and Burnap in the vault, the bandit dashed out of the cage. In a second he and his companion had popped through the outside doorway and leaped into the car.

As the big machine shot away from its place by the curb and whirled down the road toward the depot, three men who had been crossing the street from the post-office toward the bank stopped and stared after it.

"Now I wonder what's the matter with them fellows?" said one of the three—Postmaster Gordon. "Seems like they're in an awful hurry."

The postmaster and his friends were not long in finding out what the matter was. In the doorway of the bank appeared the excited cashier and his white-faced assistant.

"Robbers!" shouted Simmons. "Robbers! Catch them! They've robbed the bank!"

He pointed down the road after the retreating machine.

For a few seconds much loud talk ensued, other men gathering quickly at the hubbub—all the talkers meanwhile gazing in the direction of the fast-moving automobile. And then suddenly an astonishing thing happened before their eyes.

As the automobile drew near the depot, from the east a freight-train—the local freight—pulled up to the station. Calmly, with a deliberateness that to the bandits must have been maddening, the engine and several cars rolled slowly across the roadway and stopped, not two seconds before the automobile would have been safely over the crossing. The attentive group up by the bank saw the touring-car come to a sudden pause. The bandits' way to safety was blocked!

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"They're blocked!" shrieked Cashier Simmons. "Get some guns, everybody! Get some guns, and we'll nail 'em yet!"

Everybody present scuttled to do as suggested.

BLUSTERER that Conductor Blacky Snell was, he yet was a stubborn man. Despite the showing-up that Clint Kyle had given him on Wednesday, when the local arrived at Redford on Thursday afternoon he still wore his short-barreled pistol under the flap of his overalls.

As Snell stepped off the local and moved toward the depot, in an even more savage mood than ordinarily was the case—as might be imagined—a sharp, angry voice fell upon his ears. He looked around and perceived a big touring-car stopped on the roadway not more than forty feet from where he stood, its progress barred by the cars of the local freight that stood on the crossing.

From the front seat of the touring-car a man had hopped out. It was this man's voice that had been addressed to Snell. The man was now running toward the conductor, gesticulating with his left hand, his right hand resting in the side pocket of his coat.

"Cut those cars!" cried the man from the automobile. "We want to get through! Cut those cars, I say—and do it quick, you ——!"

The last word he addressed to Snell was offensive—an unprintable name. Coming on top of the conductor's present irritation, in his present state of mind, the thing was unbearable.

"You ——!" shouted Snell, flinging back the name and drawing his stubby revolver.

The move was unfortunate for Blacky. The other man's hand came out of his coat pocket, and with it came an automatic pistol. The automatic pistol cracked once. Snell spun around and dropped to the ground, a bullet in his shoulder.

One shot, however, was the automatic pistol man's limit. As the man had fired, Clint Kyle stepped out the waiting-room door. Seeing what looked like serious business, he decided to take a hand. He flashed forth his .45 and got into expert action.

Two shots came from the old .45. The first one sent the automatic pistol flying from its owner's hand; the second sent the hat flying from his head. The amazed man glanced wildly at this unexpected assailant, to all appearances in a panic and plainly meditating flight.

"Don't you run!" warned Kyle. "What's in this gun can travel a lot faster'n you!"

Clearly the warning was effective; the man meekly raised his hands above his head without even being told to do so. His gaze shifted uneasily from the agent to Snell's brakemen, now coming on the run from the direction of the caboose.

Kyle stepped from the doorway toward him. As he did so, he heard a great shouting up the street. Looking in that direction, he beheld a crowd of men coming toward the depot hotfoot. They were quite near—flourishing revolvers, shotguns and rifles. At their head was the unmistakable slender figure of Cashier Simmons.

"Stop thieves!" came the cry. "Robbers! Stop them!"

"So that's it!" said Clint aloud, perceiving the touring-car and the haste with which its two occupants were now climbing out.

"Hold up, there!" he shouted and blazed away twice more with his trusty old gun, sending a shot zipping close to the ear of each of the two just as they stepped away from their car.

The two brought up with extreme abruptness, ducking their heads involuntarily as if anticipating more shots, and then backed up against their machine.

"That's the stuff!" yelled Clint. "Up with your hands—and hold 'em up till the boys get here!"

Cashier Simmons and his boys got there with exceeding promptness. In less than thirty seconds they were swarming about the pair—threatening, brandishing weapons.

"Come on," said Kyle to the man near him; "I guess you're wanted, too. Step up and we'll see."

Clint and his prisoners reached the excited crowd about the automobile just in time to see Cashier Simmons triumphantly haul a black-leather satchel from the bottom of the car and jerk it open.

"Hurray!" shouted Simmons jubilantly, pulling out the sealed package and peeking at the bundles of bills and the loose coin at the bottom of the grip. "It's here!"

He held the package and grip up for the agent to observe.

"Great work, Kyle!" he exclaimed. "Bank robbers! Nearly got away with it, too!"

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Kyle grinned a little.

"Darned if they didn't!" he said. He indicated his prisoner. "Here, take care of this one. I got something else to look after."

The Redford men laid hands on the agent's captive, and Clint hurried over to where Conductor Snell was lying, surrounded by this time by his local crew.

"Where'd he get you, Snell?" asked Clint, stooping over the conductor.

Now Snell from the first had never lost consciousness. Even as he had fallen helpless to the ground, he had seen the lightning swiftness with which Kyle had gotten his old .45 to working, preventing the bandit from firing a second shot that well might have ended the conductor's days right there. So, when Kyle spoke, it is small wonder that there was a grateful expression in Snell's eyes as he looked up and answered.

"In the right shoulder, Kyle," said the conductor. "Not dangerous, I guess, but it hurts some."

"Glad it's no worse," responded Clint. "Can't I give you a lift?"

But Snell, with a brakeman's arm already supporting him, struggled until he sat up. He fumbled around with his left hand until he found the stubby revolver that was lying beside him, dropped there when he fell.

"I'm obliged for what you did," he said to the agent and held the pistol out to him. "Here, Kyle—take this," went on Blacky. "Take it and throw it into the first ash-barrel you see, will you? Say, I sure am a —— of a gunman!"

GHOST-SONG OF THE SPANISH BUCCANEERS

By HARRY KEMP

WE ARE the Spanish buccaneers; none braver ever died—
We waded through five hells of sand with nothing but our pride,
Our Spanish pride and our lust for gold and nothing else beside.

Oh, ever our fevered nights were hung with strange new stars a-swim
As we mixed barbaric litanies with credo and with hymn,
While every morn an alien dawn flared up the desert's rim.

One noon we glimpsed a shining lake that silver-lit the plain,
But trees grew nigh it upside-down, then rightside-up again—
And we knew it was the devil's lie and prayed to God for rain.

And once we saw a fleet of ships that sailed along the sand
Where a sea that never was broke white on a dim, dissolving strand—
And we prayed to Christ as children do and trudged on hand in hand.

Oh, ever the Cities of Cibola, we saw them in our sleep:
Their climbing tops sat in the sky like clouds piled heap on heap—
And we laughed apart like madmen, each with his own dream to keep.

And, though we never got to them, but, one by one, sank down,
The Seven Cities of Cibola belie not their renown,
But somewhere, yet, they wait our quest, each star-encircled town!

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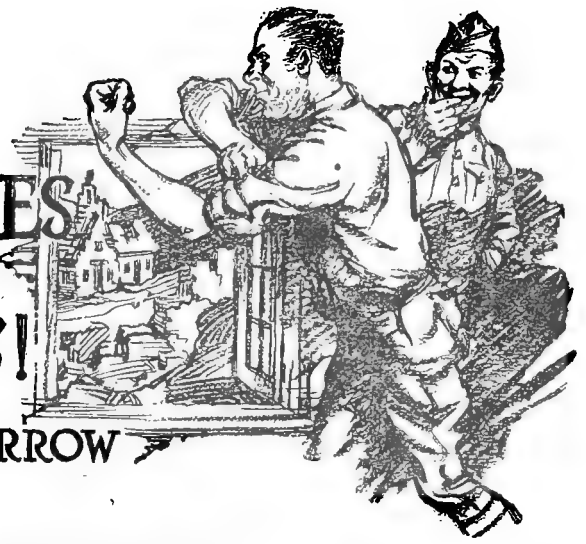
CIGARS CIGARETS CHOCOLATES and BONBONS!



by THOMAS McMORROW

Author of "Murderer's Cross."

UNDERSTAND me, gents, I'm not a man to hold a grudge. Let bygones be bygones is what I say. Some birds in this man's Army are planning to take their discharge papers with their left hand so they can knock the nearest looey for military honors with their right, and I guess they know their own mind best. But that ain't my way. If I was some mess sergeants which I could mention, and people started to throw things at me as I come smiling down the gang-plank into Hoboken, I wouldn't take it for granted they was all bouquets even if they looked that way, as some birds feel bad enough about mess sergeants to throw bouquets with a brass door-knob inside.

That also ain't my style. I'm not even sore on the Jerries, now that the war is over, if they're willing to stand for the raw deal I give them over here, which it wouldn't be human nature to expect them to forget it. I forgive them all! I'm sweet as a nut! But, gents, there's one person in the A.E.F., which he is a flat-footed mutt of a doughboy like you and me, and whenever I'm turned loose in the old United States I'm going to look him up, and he better invest his pay in mileage and travel in circles leaving me in the middle. Hear me!

What did he do?

Well, he saved my life—that's what he done.

Any of you gents ever meet up in your travels with a guy called the "Merchant"—"Scallan the Merchant"?

Gerrity's my name, gents, "Bull" Gerrity; so called on account I ain't afraid of nothing. I seen them all, Chateau-Thierry and Soissons and the St. Mihiel, and I'd be deceiving you gents if I let you think I was ever really scared in my life, and I'm a man likes to start with strangers right. I got no medals or crosses hanging on me for what I done, which isn't to say I didn't earn them. But I got good control. I seen bushels of crosses handed out in my time, and I noticed early that the kind the doughboy gets is mostly cut off a bush and his dog-tag wired on, and so I learned control. That there wound chevron I got in the Argonne, where the Jerries gassed me first and then shot me full of holes, and that's the affair I want to explain.

We come out of the St. Mihiel near Pont Mousson last September.

Some of us come out, and we were resting up in a frog barracks in the woods. I was an acting corporal them days and could have been maybe a acting sergeant by now, only one of them ninety-day wonders give me an argument about regulations, and I'm a man that knows when he's right, and so he gets me busted.

And then the captain comes around to see me and tells me our replacements are coming tomorrow.

"Gerrity," says the skipper to me, "I'm giving you the last squad, knowing you'll

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break them in right. Start them off on the left foot, Gerrity! Make them respect you. I'm depending on you an awful lot, as a last squad is just about half of the company!"

"You said it, Captain," I says. "There's some corporals which the way they let the last squad straggle on a hike it is more than half the company! You leave them rookies to me. I ain't a man to talk about myself, but, if them birds don't hang on to the column after this like the squad ahead was carrying the rations, you just inquire for them in the ambulance and move me up one!"

And I gives him a snappy salute and a swell about-face and beats it back for the crap game which the cooks was running in the new mess shack.

Me and "Buck" Biddle went down to the train the next morning to get our new men.

Say, them birds was funnier than a Tank Corps show, and me and Buck would have laughed, only it made us homesick to see them fat packs once more! It wouldn't be right to ask two German prisoners to carry the packs them supply sergeants crowd on to a rookie. Two blankets apiece they had; two suits of underwear, four pairs of wool socks, knife, fork and spoon, bacon and condiment cans, extra O.D. shirts, tent-pole and pins, ramrod, extra shoes and leggin's, extra pants, towels, handkerchiefs—some of them was carrying them dear old I.D.R's, and I seen them! Buck and me had a pack between us consisting of two shelter halves and a blanket.

"It's a wonder they didn't bring barrack bags," says Buck.

And then he grabs my arm and points.

"Look!" he chirps. "Look!"

I look, and there's a sandy little runt pulling a blue barrack bag on to his shoulder sure enough, and we both give a yell of joy.

The wide little runt turned his head to watch us and stood still with the bag resting on the car step and holding the strings over his shoulder. Them other weight-lifters had struggled out on to the road and was standing with their rifles propping up them packs so they shouldn't rupture themselves.

"Fall in here, you ——!" I hollers.

I forget what I called him, but I guess it was plenty.

He had shifty gray eyes under a broad and wrinkled forehead, and I ought to of known this was the kind of bird is always moping into trouble and shedding it like water off of a duck's back.

"Addressing yourself to me, buddy?" he pipes in a dry little voice. "Let me slip you a piece of advice," he says. "The next time your yap opens at me like that I'm going to open a few buttonholes in your lip to shut it up with."

"You know you're talking to a non-commissioned officer, you wart?" I hollers, starting toward him.

"Oh!" he says, frightened. "Ain't you one of this troop of comedians? I ain't never traveled with a show before. Looking at you now, there is something funny about your face. Put it there, big boy!"

He steps away from the car and puts out his mitt.

I seen that this bird had to be started and started right, like the skipper told me; so I started a haymaker for his near ear.

"I'll put it there!" I sings out.

But I didn't, on account he wasn't there to receive. Somehow he wasn't there, and I near fell down, and he catches my elbow and helps me up. It was lucky for him I didn't land on him with that first wallop, and what I would of done to him is a shame, as once I start smacking a guy I never know when I get enough. But, missing like that, I had time to get my control working.

"Don't try none of that replacement camp stuff on us!" I warns, shaking him off like a leaf. "You're in the Army now!"

I shoves the other men into line, which they had taken advantage to sit down on their loads, and I lead that pack-train away. That's my way with rookies. I start them right and don't stand for no nonsense.

THAT afternoon the skipper lines them up and gives out the squads, and he give me the last squad like he said, which I got to admit to it I was the best soldier in the company.

I herded my group right away into the barracks of the Fourth Platoon, which was next to the kitchen, and I made them a friendly little spiel so they would feel at home. Maybe I spoke a little loud on account it was near mess time and them dizzy cooks was harmonizing behind the field range and passing a bottle of lemon extract, as is a cook's custom when he had ought to be watching his goldfish.

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My men sat about on their bunks, six of them.

"Where's Scallan?" I says, looking at my list.

"Search me, kid," says one of them by the name of Otto.

"You speak to me like that again," I says, "and you'll be searched all right, only it'll be going into the guard-house according to regulations! You call me sir, understand?"

"I'm Scallan," said that wide and sandy runt, pulling his head out of his barrack bag, which I seen was full of cigar-boxes and cartoons of biscuits and all such.

"Men," I says, "first off I want to congratulate with you on getting into my squad, where you'll learn soldiering if I got to bust every one of you in the nose. You're a lot of drafted men, you are, but you better remember I'm not. I wasn't dragged into the Army by the neck. I wasn't. I come by myself——"

"And, after they seen you, they sent for us," one of them puts in.

"We was asked to come, we were!" says another, swelling out his chest.

"You're feeling clever, are you?" I interrogates. "You're dealing with one of the old 47th now, I warn you, and the old 47th was so tough they was all flat on one side from sleeping in the guard-house! Them that wasn't is such as I flattened my own way. Don't think you'll make me any trouble, because I disgust trouble, and the first man-jack of you turns up his beezer at me is going to have it bent that way for keeps! Do you compre?"

I guess they did all right!

"I bet you don't fight with crowds till they send for help, do you, sir?" asks one of them.

"Our corporal smokes liver and spits glue and chews the nuts off piston rods, he does!" says another, shaking his head.

"When he runs, the ground shakes," says another. "When he can't find a cemetery to sleep in, I bet he makes one!"

"I notice the wind changed when he hollered that time, boys," says another, taking a flash out the window. "It looks like he brought down rain, too!"

And they set to work like so many nice girls, hanging out their lingerie and opening their packs to get the wrinkles out of their trousseau. I showed each man where he could hang up and keep his stuff safe, as there's men in all outfits go around crooking. And right there I get a new suit of underwear which I been asking that supply sergeant for three months.

They were a willing bunch, too, and not them kind which wants to be moping into estaminets and guzzling *vin blancs* and *cognacs* in their spare time and looking for Salvation Armies and mademoiselles. To occupy their mind, I set them on a detail digging out a drain under them barracks and policing up around, and I sits down on the step and cribs some French out of a *Vie Parisienne*, as that walk from the train had made me tired. That's my way—I got to be always doing something, and I guess what's good enough for me is good enough for my squad.

But what I wanted to tell you about was this Scallan the Merchant.

GENTS, when I tell you the stuff that runt used to get away with, you'll call me a liar and say it can't be done, which you won't be more than half right.

First off, you're right that nobody can buck the United States Army. They might have had the cops hiding in doorways where they come from, and maybe the local undertaker dusted off a coffin when he seen them put on their hat, but, believe me, they got to behave in this man's Army! There's nothing to it. I've seen them all wild as a bunch of Texas steers, woolly men never curried below the knees, and I seen them same terrors of the untamed prairies speechless as a muzzled rabbit when some little shave-tail bawled them out for a speck of cosmolene in their chamber. Am I right?

But then there's something else.

Some birds got a knack of getting a hold on this Army, and they're not the battling kind. They hit the soft places. Such men is dog-robbers and clerks, inkies and interpreters. They always manage to pick out the prunes and leave us dumb-bells the dry punk. I'll tell the world I never got half what I deserved in this Army, and lots of them kind I speak about would have bracelets on their ankles and an orderly walking behind them with fixed bayonets if they got the same!

And that's the kind this Merchant was.

That runt wasn't in the Army—he was only attached for rations!

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Any time I look around for him for a detail, such as curry a mean mule or clean out a stable or crawl through a drain, I might as well look in a pioneer kitchen for pie. He simply wasn't there. But let the bugler blow that old mess call, and the last sweet notes wouldn't have died away before there was the runt as little as life with his feet crossed and resting himself against the mess shack door!

He didn't stand no formations, neither. He'd sleep through reveille, and then he'd go to sick call, where he'd bull the medical officer into marking him quarters or light duty. He'd come dragging back to the company after first drill call if he couldn't improve. And about all the drill he ever done was a salute and an about-face, and it was a sight to see the looey hollering in all the billets to try and scare up the runt so he could show us fellows with three hitches how to salute. A snappy salute is high, low, jack and the game in this Army, and no officer could think wrong of a guy who always brought it down with a jerk and slept with one eye on the door ready to spring up and holler attention!

He was always smart looking, too. I got to give him credit for that, which tickles an officer to see and shows how the runt never missed a trick. He bought a hat cut frog style so as to look distinguished, and he was the first in the regiment to put on his leggins upside down like a marine. But that's about all he done. When he was hiking, he'd manage to be helping the mechanic to put up a job on us in the gas chamber, which they had one to give us a new Jerry gas for fear we'd miss it up front. When we went into the gas chamber, the Merchant was busy outside, *tres occupé*, holding the door against us and closing up leaks in the windows.

He give out, too, that he was a comedian when the personnel officer called for talent, and that way he copped mopes, too, working on a plan to divert us flatfoots and distract us, and palling around with Miss Shanks, the Salvation girl. He had a picture of a guy with his back turned to the camera and flexing his muscles and showing his grand development, and he give out that it was him, which nobody could deny, seeing as the guy never turned around and the Merchant never changed his shirt.

He used to use them mopes of his to buy all kinds of trash in them frog villages, candles and herrings and cheese and biscuits, and he packed them home in that barrack bag and sold them to us. And that's why we called him the Merchant. Three for a franc he would get candles, for instance, and I seen him sell them for five francs in the billets—and men battling to give him their money.

He certainly did work them Salvation Armies and Y's!

He would use to write himself orders and sign them, too, as lieutenant and tell them secretaries he was the company clerk and could they give him supplies for five officers. Which most Y's would give an officer their huts if they weren't nailed down. He bought cigarets by the cartoon and boxes of chocolate and canned fruit, in canteens maybe ten kilometers away, catching trucks, and it's my experience in the Argonne that most canteens is ten kilometers away, and they won't give you a pass into the next muddy little village.

If a Salvation truck did come along, it wouldn't be no more than a speck of dust down the road when the runt would begin to hum, and then he would burst into song such as "Brighten Up a Corner of the Bar," and he would call the lady-looey "sister" and lead her to a good place she could set up her kitchen. And there he would be handing out three doughnuts to us brothers waiting in line and taking our *dix sous*.

When they would have singsongs, he would walk up and down the aisle, encouraging us and telling us to open our mouth. He was a bear on the "Old-Time Religion" and, to hear him sing "When the Roll Is Called up Yonder I'll Be There," you'd never suspicion that he had never answered a roll-call on time in his life. Except muster on pay-day, maybe. He would also relate his experiences, and he must have known every joint in the States from the Bowery to the Barbary Coast, which he would admit to it he was once a sinful man like you and me before he smelt them Salvation doughnuts. He could walk on his hands, too, and do a double-flip into a barrel.

I don't say nothing about what he done to them Y's, and I might crab some good guy's racket which he is doing his best to get along and pick up a piece of easy change somewhere in France. But all I

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wonder, when I hear guys bawling them out for charging more than the commissary, is how any of them secretaries ever got even their salary with that Merchant selling goods for them within reach of their till. About all he ever bought for himself was money-orders, and I stood alongside of him in a Y one day and seen him send home seven hundred dollars.

But wait till I tell you one stunt he pulled on me! Gents, I get overheated when I talk about that runt.

It was my way to give my squad training exercises to harden them up, and "Skinny" Malane was putting a key down his back where I made his nose bleed one morning showing him one of my blows. I always did have a good fast jab, and I got to admit to that. The Merchant was doing bunk fatigue with a newspaper over his face to keep off them yellow frog wasps, it being Saturday morning and drill and inspection over for the week so it was safe to show himself.

"Next I'm going to show you the blow I put out the champ of Coon Corners with," I says, doing fast footwork around Skinny and feinting him into a knot.

"When the 47th was down in Petersburg last year, I cleaned up all them good boys with this wallop," I explained. "You other guys needn't be looking at Skinny, because I'm going to learn all of you them favorite blows of mine right now! Such men as can't stand the gaff has got no license in this man's Army, and I'm going to harden you up! Now watch me close——"

And I made a dandy feint, leading my left scientific and then switching to a fast right uppercut which come whizzing up from below with all my weight behind it and straight for Skinny's jaw. And the Merchant claimed afterward there must be some mistake and he didn't put out his hobnails and kick me in the face, and he is a cock-eyed liar. And I was sitting on the floor and counting if I had them twenty teeth called for by regulations, and the Merchant sits up and rubs his eyes and looks around.

Then he pretends to see Skinny and me.

Say, if I didn't know the rat he was, I'd 've liked him for the way he makes a rush at Skinny, and three men hanging on to his arms. He says:

"What do you mean beating up our non-commissioned officer, you bum? Come on now and brutalize me, too!"

He breaks loose and comes over just in time to trip me again as I was getting up to kill him. Then he goes out and tells the whole company Skinny Malane slipped one over on Bull Gerrity, and I'm busy explaining.

THAT afternoon he come into the billet where I am rubbing arnica. He fusses around making himself a good fellow, which I will say he knew a lot about painting a blue eye.

"It's a shame, that's what it is," he says. "I mean the way the men are talking about you and saying it was coming to you a long time. You must have been learning a lot of the boys them favorite blows of yourn, Bull. Even the looey was talking about you when I went to him about the bouts he's putting on in the *foyer du soldat* tonight."

"What did he say?" I demand to know.

"He says you was a big false alarm," says the deceitful runt. "He says you can't box for sour apples and that Miss Shanks could use your right swing for a powder-puff, only it is against her regulations. He said you fall over your feet and——"

"And what did you say to that?" I asks.

"You bet I didn't let him get away with it! I says to him you was a misunderstood man and Skinny couldn't beat you again in a thousand years and you demanded to have another chance. I said you would recoup yourself with some of them blows you learnt off them champs in Petersburg, and I got him to put you down for a bout tonight."

I was awful gratified to hear, and right away I planned to ask Miss Shanks to be there, being as I was always a quick thinker.

"Merchant," I says, "you are one white skate, what I mean! You wait and see what I will do to Skinny tonight! First I will make some comedy and give the boys a good laugh, and then I will slip over the old haymaker, and it will take some bugler to blow reveille for Skinny after that one punch, believe me!"

And I gets up and does some fancy shadow boxing around the billet, and the Merchant was tickled to death with my speed.

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"That's the stuff!" he cries. "Lean on him with that uppercut again! Now for the old one-two! Now rush! You go right after that guy tonight like that. Tear right into him and give him a good smacking! All you got to do is knock him cold, and you'll have some rep around this camp, believe me!"

Which, believe me, I would if I did, for the other guy was not Skinny Malane, and it was too late to explain when I seen that big stiff rubbing his dogs in rosin in his corner and grinding his teeth. It was "Knock-Out" Larrup, him who fought Sam McVey a ten-round no-decision in Philly and was exhibiting himself for a patriot to the A.E.F.—and I didn't know even that much until I smelt ammonia and the lieutenant said I would be all right now and not raise up my head.

And then I remembered I seen the Merchant talking to this Larrup outside the door of the *foyer du soldat* that afternoon, and I got to figuring if there wasn't something about him, being so familiar with a famous man like this Larrup turned out to be on me. So, when the Merchant come around later to explain it was just another of his mistakes, I taxed him. And he come in and sat down and lit up a straw hat. Then I asked him questions, and he broke down and confessed he was only a snow-shoveller in civil life, except when it got too cold to work out of doors, and then he sold fans to get along, and I was to keep this inside info under my hair.

WELL, gents, it was the last week in September when we started on that hike into the Argonne.

You birds have all hit them frog roads, pulling the old kilometers to you one at a time, and I don't need to tell you what happened to them fat packs. A fellow has got pretty soon to figure whether he rather stay with his platoon or his pack, seeing as he can't stick to both. And then he drops out of line, and, when he comes up again at the next rest, that hump on his back is some reduced. Some patriot had ought to wise the gents which give out them contracts in Washington for all that junk that they can get all they want if they send a truck after any column of doughboys, supposing there's nothing in it for them and the good of the service.

At the first night stop they will collect bookoo bacon and condiment cans, I'll say. In one compartment goes dry coffee, and sugar in the other, and all you got to do is bring it to a brisk boil and serve. Only you'd be shot if you lit a match in the lines, supposing you asked a mess sergeant for coffee and sugar and he let you live. When you get up close enough, you make a neat pile of them packs anyway, so wandering pioneers and passing mule-skinners and frog artillery can come and salvage themself a new pair of pants. They say them packs is a big help in case they bust a shrapnel over the old tin hat, and that's a grand reason for carrying a bathtub, too.

It was one of the greatest sights of the war to see the Merchant on a hike, the load he carried on his hump!

He was stronger than a horse, and a hundred meters away he looked bigger, the way that pack raised over his head. He started into the Argonne with cigarets enough to throw a smoke barrage, and we didn't never give up hope of buying any necessary from a pair of bones to a chew so long as the Merchant stuck to the column. We couldn't have got along without that pack.

You'd think that a bird like that, who was always on the make, would be as popular as a gas alarm, and I'd be deceiving you if I told you we didn't trust he'd fall down some day under that load and get crushed to death. But nobody interfered with the Merchant after a few. He wouldn't never fight, understand me, which is against regulations, but he had a nasty habit of taking guys by their legs and throwing them up in the air. And then he would stand on them when they come down.

So it was only hard-boiled guys and guard-house lawyers which wanted any part of him, and, if they ever come back for seconds, I'll say they were hogs. And after they got their share they knew better than make a yawp. So everybody was pleased to see him operate them low and lofty tumblers, figuring that whoever took a beating was going to need it, him or the other, and all had a nice time and dispersed much pleased.

Well, sir, that trip we caught up with the Jerries around Cheppy, relieving the 35th, which some people say gained their

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objection and some don't. I ain't arguing that, except to say they're good boys and, if any is here present, I'll take their word for it, and I seen seven hundred of their casuals laying around the crossroads in them old brown tents where you turn off for Very. The frogs was just setting up their .155s along the road, as we come through, to fire over the orchard on top of the hill, and they helped us out a lot, and I hear they got a medal. And I would enjoy to meet up with that frog let that baby go alongside my ear while I was bawling out a straggler, and I would hang a good one on him for myself. Which I ain't never heard good on that side since.

The Merchant was always digging for souvenirs, by which I don't mean to say there wasn't other men in my old outfit would take a souvenir if they couldn't get out of it. I had a grand little Luger myself, no bigger than the inside of your hand and firing one shot, which the Jerry officers carry so as to blow out their brains. I got it when I was bawling out some stragglers for moping into a Jerry dugout, and the skipper himself come after it, collecting such souvenirs being against regulations unless you got transportation, and he offered me a hundred francs for it on the spot when I admitted I didn't know where I put it.

Then he offered to mind it for me, but I figured he might forget where he put it, too, which I have known to happen to souvenirs before. If you ask me, I don't think the Merchant had more than maybe a couple of *Gott Mitt Uns* at that time, on account I was always strong for regulations and wouldn't stand for no moping in my squad.

But the boys said he had all kinds, and I bet there would have been an awful battle around his pack if ever one of them Jerry shells lit under him, which we always said a prayer and turned to see, it being allowed to take anything issue from a dead man, his roll and personal property being sent back to the States according to regulations and when the chaplain could find them.

This time I'm telling you about, we was laying in a bit of woods between Cheppy and Exermont, and Shadron Farm on our left flank, if any of you remember. And to the right we could see the houses of Montfaucon on the hill shining like a heap of bones. The Jerries had Exermont, and we had Montfaucon. And there was some argument over who had the Farm. Our first line run along the front of the woods set back inside the bushes, and our supports was along both sides, and Regimental P.C. along the rear; so the Jerries could dump their G.I. cans in the woods, and no hard feelings except from the runners whose paths were messed up. We were lying in them deep narrow holes the frogs advised us to build at Soissons—where we didn't and got learned a lesson—and according we weren't in no danger, except maybe starving to death, unless they threw something right down the back of our neck.

Shadron Farm wasn't more than four stone houses with red roofs in that last valley, and the wise men said the Jerries had moved out and gone over the top of that last hill, which I will explain to you the hill just ahead of you in the Argonne is always the very last, and after you take it the land is quite flat. But every little while our Stokes mortars got nervous and started to turn over the farm houses there once more and look if maybe they couldn't find one last little Jerry laying snug behind a cellar wall and squinting an eye along a machine-gun.

Which it is only fair to say the surest way to handle them Jerry machine-gunners was to blow their guns away from them, as I seen one of them with his head blown off, and there he sat with his finger on the trigger, and some fellows claim he was firing that gun as they come running up. I see them laying beside their pits where they dug in at every road, tough old sinners with long lilacs, and you could most generally find a bottle of *cognac* on them and some home-made cigars, which shows that their job wasn't figured no mope even in the German army.

And, seeing them birds there, I didn't feel so bad about our artillery feeding sweet rice and hot cakes every morning while we was battling for a slice of corned Willie in the lines, seeing as they knocked them Jerries for a row. Once I would have give them a drink out of a bottle I salvaged off one of the *Foxy Grandpa* gunners, only I drunk it all up first.

But say, we had a bunch in my old outfit which, if they seen the devil standing in his gate, they would run up and pull the snapper off of his tail and send it back

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home to a girl in Brush Junction! Them Jerries got wise toward the end and sent all their iron crosses home and wore a little piece of ribbon in their buttonhole instead, though it was a good idea to turn them over as they had a pocket in the tail of their coat.

YOU could generally find the Merchant where he had no business, and this day he comes moping out of the woods. I see he had a can of phosphate with him, which them runners used to daub on trees so they could find their way after dark. It was better than a first-aid bandage and quicker, and we needed them extra first-aid bandages for gun-swabs and *mouchoirs*.

"I was watching you this morning when that gas bomb come over," he apologizes, dropping into the hole alongside me. "And I seen it took you fourteen seconds to get the nose-clip of your mask into your mouth after the alarm sounded, and even then you couldn't breathe good. And I figured, if there was an alarm tonight, you would maybe not find your mouth at all in the dark, and so I am going to rub some of this stuff on the mouthpiece for you. You can get more air that way, and more according to regulations."

"You're a liar," I says. "And any time you think you can put that mask on faster than me you better ask the gas N.C.O. who put on his mask in three seconds complete back there in Toul!" Which it was me.

"Excuse me, Bull," he says. "You certainly kept your head cool back there in Toul, and I got to give you credit. None of us are perfect, Bull, and I got to admit you found your mouth quick last night when they give you the squad's can of slum!

"Listen, Bull," he says, nudging. "About that Luger you took off of me—I know where there's bookoo of them laying around, and, seeing as you got a fancy for them, I got the skipper to give me and you a pass. I want to show you that I'm your friend, Bull."

"You know where there's bookoo Lugers?" I asks, interested. "You're certainly treating me white, Merchant. You show me them Lugers, and I'll maybe give you one of them for yourself!"

"Yeah," he says. "I know some Jerry dugouts where there ain't been a single American yet! You and me will go there and clean up. The skipper met me back there near Company P.C., and he give me an order, and I got him to leave my corporal go, too, as a favor."

"Where's them dugouts?" I asks.

"You see that hill back there where we went over yesterday morning?" he says, pointing a kilometer behind us.

"Yes! Is that the place?"

"No, that ain't it. But it will be useful so we won't lose our way. You see that other hill behind our short sixes to the right?"

"Yes! Then that's it. We'll get a chance to hit that artillery kitchen, too!"

"No," he says.

"There is the place," says the deceitful runt, pointing toward the left.

"Shadron Farm!" I exclaims.

"Now you got it," he says. "I'll bet it's full of dead Jerries. The skipper wants to know for sure what's down there, and I seen my chance to do you a favor, Bull, and so we're ordered to go and patrol up and down there like a couple of M.P.'s. There won't be no danger whatever unless our artillery blows us up, which I will arrange for them to put a barrage down on top of the Farm so the Jerries will never suspect we are there. You're to go and see the skipper now, Bull."

And he slides out of the hole and into his own before I could as much as fetch a kick at him, and I reached for my canteen cover to get out a grenade, and he was as near being blown up by his own artillery that minute as ever in his life. I was so mad.

For it was just plain suicide to mope into the Farm with all them Jerry snipers sitting up for us, and I wouldn't have took that detail for all the Lugers in Germany. But I goes back and sees the skipper, and he told me the same, giving me a handshake and telling me to be back before five in the morning, or I'd be A.W.O.L., and to hail as soon as I dodged the first Yank bullet coming back, if I wasn't killed. And that's the first time I got a pass to stay out in France all night.

I was to take fat Otto along with that rat of a Merchant, and I called them over as soon as it got dark.

"What we got to watch out for," says Otto, "is not to lose our way in that there

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Jerry wire, being as these here issue compasses is *pas bon.*"

"You leave all that to Bull," says the Merchant, which to hear him you'd think I didn't have a better friend in the outfit. "Our corporal won't let this patrol get into no danger, not while he's with it."

And then I seen the can of phosphate the Merchant had brought out of the woods, and I got an idea!

"Listen," I says, "we'll mark our way with that there phosphate! What do you say to that?"

"That's a great scheme," agrees Otto. "Only I won't carry the can."

"The Merchant will carry the can," I says. "That's settled."

"How do you get that way?" says the Merchant. "I'm to go along like a dizzy lamplighter so you guys won't get lost?"

"I always thought you was yellow," I says.

At that he picked up the can, and we crawl out and start for the Jerry wire. Which I will explain to you that it was a kilometer to the Jerry lines, and between was a crazy plain you would lose your way on in the daylight if you couldn't see the hills. So there wasn't no special danger to carry that can of phosphate or do the marking. The Jerries and frogs had been battling across that country for four years, and they hadn't left a house or a stone on a stone or a fence or anything; so you would think it was the wild and woolly West, except for the shell-holes. There was a wagon trail through it about half a kilometer away, but the shells were hitting it as regular as a sledge. So we took one of them crooked one-man paths that was open in the wire. You understand that there wasn't no trench behind the wire, and it was sewed there by the Jerry artillery so as to make you go where they wanted you and not be moping all over the lot and wasting the Kaiser's ammunition. And the Merchant daubs his phosphate on them corkscrew iron uprights.

I sent Otto ahead, planning to stay between them myself, where I would be in reserve from both directions, which was good generaling. I stopped back with the Merchant a minute, as I didn't feel right about making him sore, not if he was going to walk behind me, as he was a man to make mistakes.

"This patrol will stick together if it's up to me, Corporal," he says.

"Merchant," I says, shaking him by the hand, "you are one good guy what I mean!"

Well, sir, we went through that wire. And, if you ever been in the Argonne on a moonless night, it is darker than the inside of a dog's mouth. And also you can watch your step, on account if you run your foot against a potato masher, which the grass is full of them, you may not go to heaven, but it will give you a long start up. And we came to the edge of the valley, and down below was Shadron Farm, and you could see it as plain as if it was down a coal mine.

"Go right ahead," I whispers to Otto, who'd slowed up. "Don't get nervous—I'll keep behind you! Go on down and stop alongside that white cow-shed or whatever it is till we come along!"

I was always like that, cool as can be, which I remind you so as you will understand what I am going to relate.

OTTO crawled down into the valley, with his finger on his trigger, and I decided to start the Merchant the same way, as there was no special danger up on the plain, and I wasn't needed from that direction.

Just then the Jerries began to wonder if all was well in our district, and I hear them shells coming over our way from the road. It seems like each Jerry battery has its district to patrol, generally between two roads, and they pound one road, hoping to pile something up, and then they swing over, dropping shells in between for luck. And right then I hear that short, terrible whistle which means a shell has got your name on it, and it busts alongside of me before I can flop!

For a minute I thought I was killed and give up hope. Then I got a choking smell and an awful sick feeling, weak all over, and I knew I was gassed. How I knew I was gassed for sure is about seventy-five per cent. of them Jerry shells has gas-bottles in them along with their high explosive, it being their plan to camouflage it that way, knowing we wouldn't pay no attention to them H.E.s until all of a sudden we got that awful sick feeling. First they throw their Brown Cross, which smells like sour apples and makes

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you so sick you can't keep a mask on. And when you are that way you are their dish, and they put the regular Green Cross on to you, which smells like lime, and one good sniff and you are through. So, when I get that sick feeling and weak all over, I knew I better partee toot sweet and lay down somewheres, as the worst thing you can do is keep going.

But first I got into a shell-hole and pulled out my mask; so I had presence of mind. Only I remembered I turned in the canister that morning and the supply sergeant asked me to wait a minute for the new one, and I said I would come back.

I didn't say nothing to the Merchant when he come along, not wanting to open my mouth in all that gas. But he jumped right down and took a hold of my shoulder.

"Got it bad, Bull, old horse?" he says, kneeling down.

"Awful bad," I says, and my heart was pounding, which is another sign of Brown Cross. "I'm gassed," I says.

He sniffs the air.

Then he asked me how I felt, and at last he got the nerve to tell me I'm a liar.

"Forget it," he says. "That wasn't nothing but H. E.! Come on ahead for them Lugers!"

"No, Merchant," I says. "I'm going back."

"Going to quit on us, are you?" he says. "After all the hot air you shot into us, you're going to lay down on me and Otto. So that's how you're gaited!"

I had a good mind to get up and give him a bust in the nose, only I didn't want to exert myself. Lots of fellows are pushing up daisies which they would be as well as you and me if they laid down when they was gassed and didn't go ahead exerting and feeling sick and sicker and blaming it on the chow.

The Merchant shut up finally and stood looking after Otto.

Then he puts his arm under my neck and raises me up.

He rubbed me on the back.

"That's where it hurts most," he says. "Generally that kind of gas comes out in streaks, up and down the spine!"

Which just goes to show you what a jake he was, as it don't do no such thing.

"I'm going down after Otto myself," he says. "First I want to have a heart to heart talk with you. You're going to wait here till we get back, in case one of us gets hit, understand? You can take it from me that exertion is going to be awful bad for you, gas or no gas; so you better not get delirious and wander back to the lines. Do you get me?"

"Sure, Merchant," I says. "I never passed up a buddy in my life! I'll be right here when you come back—only you shouldn't be too long."

Well, I lays there battling to catch my breath, and then I hears shots down in the valley. Then all was still, except machine-guns away down the line somewheres like the drumming of fingers on a table and the whistle and bang of them Jerry shells on the main road to Grand Prè.

I guess I must of laid there near an hour, till them Jerry shells started to come back. I could see them blazing their way and the whistling rising higher and shorter. And I figured Otto and the Merchant must of got theirs, and it wasn't no sense throwing away a valuable life. And I got up to go.

Ping!

That Jerry sniper must of spotted me against the starshine when I stood up, and he had got me through the left arm. I was always a great guy to keep cool; so I just laid still and waited for him to go away. I was not bleeding much, and he had missed the bone.

In about ten minutes I decides it's time to start again, and I wriggled on my belly over the top of the shell-hole and crawls that way near fifty meters toward the lines, taking good care to keep clear of them objects you could just make out shining with the Merchant's phosphate. I tell you this so there won't be no mistake in your mind when I tell you how I was done. Another fellow might have give up out there alone like that, but I got a heart like a lion and never say die.

Then I got up to walk. That's the time I got it and got it good!

It hit me like I'd stepped into one of Walter Johnson's smoke balls, in one side and out the other, and the doctor himself said he wouldn't undertake to do it himself on a bet, as a half-inch one way or other, and my insides would have took the air.

That time I took the count.

It didn't hurt much except when I moved. So I laid still.

The next thing I knew I hear somebody

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coming over the grass to me, and I figured Jerry was coming up to finish me, which I would of give him the battle of his life, only I forgot to take my rifle from that first shell-hole.

"Hey, Bull!" I hear him call.

He comes over, and I seen it was Otto and the Merchant.

They got down and looked me all over, and then the Merchant says:

"Bull, old sport, I guess he has wrote your ticket for the base. I am sorry you got it this way, but you can bank on me to keep my trap shut. Nothing would have happened to you if you laid in that shell-hole according to your promise. And we could have found you again without paging you up and down the Argonne, as we had to do just now—which was my idea!"

And he took me and slung me over his shoulder like I was a Sam Browne belt. Otto walked behind, carrying the rifles under his shoulder, as one of his arms was hanging and he was holding it up with the other.

"We got that Jerry that sniped you, Bull," he says. "We was following him up the hill after giving him an argument down on the Farm, but we couldn't locate him right till he let you have it. It was his own fault for not looking after his flame-quencher, which shows you was right yesterday when you turned me in for a dirty barrel. We got two down on the Farm, and that seems to be all they could spare us tonight!"

"I got bookoo souvenirs, too!" says the Merchant. "I got an iron cross bound in silver, and one of them nifty field-glasses. You wait and see what I got, Bull."

"There's another souvenir you're going to get, too, Merchant," says Otto. "You had ought to get something for bringing Bull in. I certainly don't want no part of it after the way you stood by me down there!"

"Bull had ought to have it himself," says the Merchant. "He done his best to get in by himself, and he had ought to get the credit!"

Well, gents, we found our way back to that Jerry wire and got through it nicely, except for having my hair combed on one side and losing a new pair of leggings, and then we all lay down, and they hail our line.

The doctor looks me over and tells me I'll be fit for a replacement in a month if I behave and that them punctures must of let all the gas out of me.

I sent for the Merchant where I was laying on a stretcher.

"Merchant," I says, "you and me ain't been always good friends, and I don't want there should be no hard feelings. You won't never make a soldier, but you done me a good turn. That Luger is there in my haversack, and I couldn't refuse it to you if you had the heart to ask for it."

Which I bet I could of sold it for bookoo jack to some bird back in the S.O.S. who wanted to go back and make a play in the States.

And he takes the Luger and goes out quick with his hand over his eyes, saying he was glad I wasn't hurt bad only a little mad in the head. I hear later that they give that guy a medal and two stripes for what he done finding out the information the skipper wanted to know.

But what I want to know—and didn't have no notion of till the next night after, when I seen my jacket hanging up in the dark—is how all that blazing phosphate got smeared all over the back of that blouse?

There was the marks of fingers where he had give me that Judas rub, and, when I turned back to the American lines that night, I must have looked like a dizzy lighthouse to that Jerry sniper!

I ain't never seen the Merchant again, seeing as they shipped me from that hospital into a replacement camp and so here. And all I say, gents, is I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt, and, if I ever get loose in the States, he better haul heels! He's one bird can dig in toot sweet and put up his box barrage and throw red lights, for it will be zero hour for him then and there, and Bull Gerrity will be coming over!

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LYNCH LAWYERS

A Five-Part Story
Part I

by **WILLIAM PATTERSON WHITE**

Author of "Hidden Trails," "High Pockets," etc.

CHAPTER I

RED KANE'S BOREDOM

"MY ——," mourned "Red" Kane, "why don't somethin' ever happen?"

"Knock wood quick," urged "Kansas" Casey, the deputy sheriff, "or somethin'll happen to you maybe."

"Huh!" snorted Red Kane, the skeptic, "I wouldn't mind. Anythin' for a change. A earthquake, or, if you'd have a fit even, it'd help. I ain't particular. Djever have fits, Kansas?" he added hopefully.

"Shore I never," denied the indignant Kansas. "You talk like I was a cat or somethin'."

"Yuh might be somethin' lots worse. Cats! Why, Kansas, cats is real people an' wide between the eyes. I dunno but what cats is most as sensible as mules."

"Well, I ain't no cat, an' don't you forget it!" Casey's grin belied his tone.

"Alla same, I wish somethin'd happen." Red Kane was not losing sight of the main issue.

"Why don'tcha get drunk?" suggested Kansas.

"Don't wanna get drunk. Dunno why, neither. 'Sfunny."

"Must 'a' got religion like Tommy Mull up at Cutter. But Tommy jumped in again with a splash that near drownded him, an' so will you. They all do."

"I guess. I'm only a poor weak vessel full 'o sin an' the devil's works, like I heard a hell-dodger say once at camp-meetin' when I was a kid back East in Arkansaw. Scared me green, them words did, till my pap told me how that was only the preacher's way o' callin' me a human being. Lordy, I wish I was back in Tom's Landing. There'd be a dog-fight or a steamboat takin' on freight or somethin'. An' a swim. A feller could take a swim, a real shore-'nough swim in twenty foot o' water. Twenty foot o' cool water, Kansas."

"Shut up!" begged the deputy. "The sweat's runnin' down the back o' my neck; that thermometer out front says ninety-five in the shade, an' they ain't no swimmin' water inside o' fifteen mile. A swim!"

"Yessir, a swim," persisted Red Kane, his eyes shining at the memory, "an' a float while yuh go driftin' down the current with the afternoon sun a-slantin' down, an' the Mississippi shore all blue an' hazy way off yonder, an' no sound but the water lappin' when yuh wiggle yore toes or maybe a steamboat whistle now an' then. Wouldn't that make yuh chew cotton, huh? I'm askin' yuh, wouldn't it?"

"Shut up, I'm tellin' yuh. She's only one o'clock an' gettin' hotter by the minute."

"All of which ain't got a thing to do with Farewell's bein' dead an' buried. I might's well stayed at the ranch an' let the 'Kid's Twin' come. He wanted to,

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an', 'cause he wanted to, I wanted to—like a fool—an' we matched a dollar, an' I won—I mean I lost."

Red Kane listlessly pulled the makings from a vest pocket and constructed a cigaret without haste and with a great deal of care.

The two men were sitting in the shade of the wide eaves of Dolan's warehouse. Through the open window of the dance-hall next door they could hear the voices of the bartender and one of the girls uplifted in a dreary wrangling.

"If it wasn't so —— hot, I'd bend this bottle over yore head!" the girl declared plaintively.

The bartender mumbled something. The girl came to the doorway and stood looking out into the street. Within the hotel corral a mule brayed a bray without spirit, a bray that broke off in the middle.

"Gawd," murmured the girl, slatting the sweat from her forehead with plump fingers, "it's too hot even for the mule."

She stared heavily at Casey and Kane, achieved a bovine wink and withdrew, her slippers slipslopping across the dance-hall floor.

"She shore feels the heat, too," chuckled Kansas Casey.

Kane nodded and inhaled deeply. He was hot and becoming hotter. Nevertheless, his desire for action of some sort remained acute. Which desire was destined to be divertingly gratified much sooner than he expected.

The northbound stage, pulling in with mail, two passengers and the Wells Fargo box, broke the front axle directly opposite the Canton restaurant. The Wells Fargo guard and the driver shot from the seat and sprawled upon the horses. The wretched passengers smote the interior of the coach with noses and knees. At the slithering impact of the guard's and driver's bodies upon their skittish backs the horses ran away at once.

The guard fell between the wheels and came out, barked and bruised but otherwise undamaged, under the rear axle. The driver, hanging to his reins, straddled the pole and strove to regain control of his tearing team. The customers of the Happy Heart saloon rushed out to see the fun. Then they rushed in again with equal promptitude and gained safety a short jump ahead of the careering stage, which mounted the sidewalk and fairly clipped the saloon's doorsill. All the cow-ponies attached to the hitching-rail ran away, and in all directions, too.

Mrs. Jackson, a nervous person, in sticking her head out of the kitchen window, knocked away the supporting stick and was held in the position of a guillotined victim of the French Revolution by the descending sash. The unhappy lady at once began to scream like a lost soul, for the window had jammed and she could not release herself.

The stage and its horses poured through Mrs. Jackson's tiny truck garden, upset the wash-bench and two tubs of water, swung round the house and back into the street, where the stage struck the Bar S buckboard and smashed the buckboard's hind wheels to splinters. Here the stage was joined by at least twenty-four dogs, who proceeded to enliven the frantic horses further by their furious barking and sundry nips judiciously delivered. All this in the midst of a swirling fog of golden dust.

At the crash of the collision with the buckboard the stage's two passengers contrived to open a door and jump. The stage was making excellent time at the moment. The two passengers came to earth in a tangle, rolled over and over in their own little dust cloud and brought up against a snapped post.

The runaways had not lost their enthusiasm. Leaving the remains of the buckboard, they wheeled and bore straight down the middle of the street till the stage locked wheels with a freight wagon. The freight wagon was strongly built, and it stood up under the shock. So did not the stage. The king-pin snapped; the body of the stage parted company with the front axle, and the six horses, freed of all encumbrance save their harness and the pole, got into racing stride in a breath.

At the edge of town they were halted by a quick-witted puncher who whirled his rope, forefooted a leader and piled up the whole outfit in a heap. Incidentally, the driver, who had stuck to his duty to the last, almost had his brains dashed out by the madly flickering heels before he could crawl clear.

The driver, "Whisky Jim," sat up and swore with great feeling. The Wells Fargo guard limped up and rescued the express box. The puncher freed his rope and coiled it. Willing spectators held the horses.

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Red Kane and Kansas Casey had not moved during all this tumult and uproar. Now Casey drew a long breath.

"There," said the deputy, "just see whatcha done, wishin' for excitement: them drunkards in the Happy Heart nigh lost a year's growth; the stage almost naturally ruined, an' Mis' Jackson like to choke—if Piney don't get that window up. There, he's got it up. An' yore buckboard looks 'sif it's gone shy a wheel or somethin'."

"She's gone shy two wheels an' the whole hind end," supplemented Red Kane, his gray eyes glistening, his tone manifesting less sorrow than it might have, "an' 'Old Salt' will just about go crazy. Won't he rave an' tear? Oh, no, he won't. He'll sue the stage company, that's what he will. Lucky them mules was in gettin' shod. Now I gotta stay here till Piney can mend the buckboard. Maybe somethin' else'll happen. C'mon, Kansas, le's irrigate. I'm a heap livened up now."

On their way to the saloon they saw the guard and "Buck" Saylor, the Wells Fargo agent, carrying the express box into the company's office.

CHAPTER II

THE MORNING AFTER

RED KANE rose early in the morning. He wished to see Mr. Piney Jackson, the town blacksmith, start to work on the buckboard. Not that Jackson was an unwilling worker, but, like many another man of his kind, Piney labored the better for being watched.

Red Kane, stretching and yawning in the street in front of Bill Lainey's hotel, chanced to glance past the front of the Starlight saloon and caught a glimpse of the side door of the express office. It was a brief glimpse, but it showed him that the door was open. Within the office part of a booted leg and foot, heel on the floor and toes up, was visible. Was that a bandage round the ankle? Was it?

Red Kane diagonally crossed the sidewalk in the direction of the express office. He hurried. Scuffling in at the door, he found that what he had taken for a bandage was a rope and that it tied fast together the ankles of Buck Saylor, the express agent. More of that same rope was passed round Saylor's wrists, and there was still enough left to go twice between Saylor's open jaws, encircle his head and finish up in a neat, tight knot beneath Saylor's occipital bone. The agent's eyes batted and rolled. He made queer noises in his throat.

"Lordy!" exclaimed Red Kane and dropped on his knees and pushed the blade of his clasp-knife in between Saylor's bound wrists.

When Saylor was free, he sat up jerkily and spoke after the manner of one who has a hot potato in his mouth, for his jaws were very raw and sore.

"They got the safe an' the express box!" were the agent's first words.

Red Kane looked sidewise. The company safe was not in its accustomed corner. Nor was the box from the wrecked stage visible. Red Kane nodded and sat down comfortably on the edge of the agent's cot.

"Yeah," said Red Kane, "g'on."

"My ——!" moaned Buck Saylor, holding his head in his hands and weaving his body to and fro. "My ——! Fifty thousand dollars in cash!"

"Huh!" Red Kane's sagging back-bone straightened with a snap.

"Fifty thousand in gold," reiterated the mishandled agent. "Forty thousand in the box for the new bank in the Bend an' ten thousand consigned to Lanpher o' the 88!"

"Insured?" asked Red Kane.

The agent shook his head.

"Ha! Ha!" barked the puncher sardonically. "Lanpher will shore lose his mind! He don't care no more for six-bits than he does for his right eye!" He broke off, perceiving that the agent failed to grasp the point of the joke. "Fifty thousand, Buck," he went on as soothingly as possible; "that's a fright, shore. Whatcha gonna do about it?"

"They took the safe!" repeated the agent. "They took the safe!"

Then and not till then did Red Kane realize the true inwardness of the agent's remark. For the Wells Fargo safe weighed a good fifteen hundred pounds. The removal of the safe was a deal more astonishing than the robbery. Kane's eyes widened.

"She's a wonder they didn't take the whole office while they was about it. Where was you?"

"Right here. Where djuh guess I'd be?

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Say—" here the agent's somewhat scattered wits returned to the fold—"we gotta get after 'em. I gotta roust out Kansas. I wish Jake was here."

"I'll get Kansas," said Red Kane, and he departed on the run.

He returned breathless in five minutes with the deputy. The agent demanded that the robbers be pursued forthwith.

"Plenty o' time," countered Kansas. "If they was bright enough to hop in an' hop out with a safe weighin' as much as two ponies, they're bright enough not to hang around where we can pounce down on 'em. Tell me all of it, Buck. Then maybe we'll know where we stand. Didn'tcha hear nobody breakin' in? You didn't let 'em in, didja?"

"I didn't let 'em in! Whatcha guess? But it was so —— hot I left the side door open. My dogs was out exercisin' round, an' I was a-settin' here on my bed waitin' for 'em to come in, an' I guess I must 'a' drowsed off."

"I guess maybe," put in Kansas. "What next?"

"Next I was bein' tied like Red found me. I thrashed round, but they had me tight. I couldn't do nothin'. Couldn't even squeak. They had the rope in my mouth first thing, o' course. An' everythin' was done in the dark."

"How many was they? Yuh must have some li'l' idea even if yuh couldn't see nothin'."

"Three—four men maybe. I ain't shore. Seems like they was a dozen, but o' course they couldn't have been so many."

"Did they say anythin'?"

"Nothin' I could hear 'cept once. They mostly muttered low. I didn't know their voices."

"What did they say that once?"

" 'Here's a express box,' says one. 'Take it along,' says another. 'They's maybe somethin' in it.' "

"They didn't know about that shipment o' forty thousand to the Bend," declared Kansas Casey. "Lanpher's money was all they knowed about, an' that extra forty was pure velvet. You couldn't swear to neither o' them voices, Buck, huh? Shore?"

"Shore. I'd never heard 'em before."

"Three men anyway, yuh say?"

"Yep. Now, for Gawd's sake, Kansas, do somethin', will yuh? Yuh've heard all I can tell yuh, an'——"

"Yeah, I'm paid to do somethin'," interrupted Kansas, staring levelly at Buck Saylor. "I'll do my job, don'tcha fret. Habit I got. Le's go out an' see how they got the safe away."

By the marks on the earth without it was evident that the midnight marauders had eased the safe along by tipping it end over end.

"She must 'a' made a jounce each time she dropped," observed Red Kane.

"She didn't make much of a noise," said the agent. "Leastwise all I could hear was li'l' bumps like."

"You must be gettin' deef," Kansas assured him.

Behind the corrals, where the marks of crowbars and boot-heels ended in a maze of tracks and gouges, the agent managed to vindicate his maligned sense of hearing.

"There," he announced, excitedly pointing his finger, "look at that mattress! That's why I didn't hear much. They dropped her on that mattress each time. I told yuh they was a heap silent."

"A heap silent!" cried Kansas Casey scornfully, pointing to the wheel-tracks of a freight wagon. "A heap silent! Look at them wagon-tracks! Why, they musta made noise enough to wake Julius Cæsar. I'm surprized the town's still here. Dunno why they didn't take you too, Buck. Yore head would make 'em a good paper-weight."

"How could I know what was gonna happen?" protested the indignant Buck Saylor. "My dogs wasn't around."

Came then Tom Kane, Red Kane's brother and a citizen of Farewell engaged in the freighting business. Tom Kane was manifestly perturbed to a degree.

"My wagon's gone!" he declared. "Likewise the marshal's pet ridin' hoss an' a team o' my mules. What t' —— you laughin' at?" he added angrily to his brother.

"You," grinned Red, "an' them midnight magruders. Which they are shore the most enterprisin' active gents I ever have the luck to hear tell of. Yes, sir."

"Yo're a —— fool!" snapped Tom Kane in proper brotherly fashion.

"Well, anyway, I got sense enough to hang on to what's mine," returned Red Kane.

"Yeah," said Tom unpleasantly, "yeah. If yore so able to hang on to what's yores, where's yore team o' mules gone?"

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"What!" cried Red. "Ain't they in the corral with yore other teams?"

"They ain't, y'betcha. Only my other team's there. Yore mules is vanished plumb away. Yore li'l' black hoss is missin', too."

Tom Kane smacked his lips with relish as he gazed at his brother. Red began to swear. He heatedly cursed the robbers and their immediate ancestors as he started off in the direction of his brother's corral.

"I'm gonna borrow one o' yore hosses," he flung back over his shoulder.

"Help yoreself," Tom called after him. "Take Jack Owen's saddle. She's hangin' inside the front door."

"Guess we've done learned all we need here," said the methodical Kansas. "Might as well scare up a posse now an' do a li'l' trailin'."

They had no need to scare up a posse. Every Farewell citizen, on hearing the news, reached for his Winchester, scooped up saddle and bridle and headed for his horse.

Within fifteen minutes Kansas Casey was riding the wagon-track trail. With him galloped the two Kanes, Buck Saylor and twenty other men. Other of Farewell's inhabitants, slower in the uptake, followed by twos and threes.

They followed the tracks eastward a distance of more than five miles. Riding through a draw, they came suddenly upon the freight wagon, its pole propped and tidily harness-hung, standing between two tall spruce trees. Beyond the wagon, where the draw, widening round a spring, formed a basin filled with lush grass, grazed four hobbled mules. Of the marshal's pet riding horse and Red Kane's black pony there were no signs.

"They shore was thoughtful devils," Red Kane observed, nodding toward the hobbled mules and the wagon. "Tom himself couldn't 'a' took more care o' that harness, an' they might 'a' left them mules run loose."

"Yuh'd oughta be grateful," chuckled Piney Jackson.

"I am. Oh, yes, shore I am, an' then a li'l' on top o' that. Bet I never see my black cayuse again."

Red had reason to be pessimistic. The black was an excellent horse: speedy, good wind and bottom and an extraordinarily easy keeper. The thieves had lifted a prize and doubtless knew it by this time.

"Where's the safe? That's what I'd like to know." Thus Buck Saylor, staring about him.

"Here she is!" replied Kansas Casey, craning his neck to see over a willow-bush.

The horsemen crowded up. There was the Wells Fargo safe, right side up and yawningly empty. The door, hinges wrenched crookedly and snapped across, lay front downward on the crushed grass. An acrid odor hung about the safe.

"Giant," averred Red Kane, sniffing.

"Shore," said Dolan, a storekeeper and the local justice. "Likely they was miners."

"Miners ain't the only folks know how to use blastin' powder," declared Red. "It might 'a' been anybody."

"It probably was," Dolan said dryly. "I wonder where the box is."

They poked about among the bushes and came at last upon the express box, smashed open and as empty as the safe, near the spring. Stuck in a crack of the splintered lid was a folded bit of paper. Red Kane was the first to reach the paper. He spread out and smoothed it against the oval fork of his saddle, the others jostling each other to read over his shoulders the few lines of penciled printing that sprawled waveringly across the gray and grimy surface. The wording ran:

hope you had a goode ride thanks for the money we didn't expect so much you'll notice we tuk goode care of your mules an harness we needed your two hosses so we'll take them with us we'll come again sometime goodby.

"An' there you are," said Red Kane, handing the paper to Kansas Casey. "All we gotta do is wait till they come again."

CHAPTER III

THE SUDDEN LADY

IT WOULD seem that the men of Farewell were destined to wait, even as Red Kane said, for there were no tracks—at least no appreciable trail leading out of the draw. Here and there were hoof-marks, but these were lost on hard ground three hundred yards further east.

"Looks like a stand-off," observed Kansas Casey. "But we gotta do somethin'."

He divided the posse into pairs and

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groups of threes and fours and sent these out in all directions to hunt signs. Red Kane and his brother Tom rode together.

Late in the afternoon they sighted the old ranch-house at the base of Sweetwater Mountain.

"They ain't nothin' there, I guess," observed Tom Kane. "Might's well swing off to the south toward the gap between Sweetwater and the Sandy Hills. Maybe them bandits went through there. If they went east, they shore did."

"We'd ought to look at that ranch-house first," demurred Red.

"What for? Nobody's lived there since the K C outfit sold out to the Cross-in-a-box five year ago. Whatsa use wastin' time, Red? Yo're always wantin' to slide off to one side. I never see such a jigger. Besides, I wanta get home some time."

"Now we're gettin' at it," grinned Red. "It ain't so much my ridin' away from the line as it is yore wantin' to get home that bothers you, huh?"

"Well, they's my mules an' my wagon back there in that draw, an' they's yore mules, too. What'll Old Salt say if anythin' happens to 'em? I should think you'd be anxious about 'em. Most any right-minded man would be. But not you. Whadda you care for other folks' property? Nothin', that's all. It might all get lost or stole, an' you wouldn't bat an eye-winker."

"Aw, the mules are all right. I want my black pony. She's the best cayuse in my string and the best cuttin' pony in the territory, bar none. You make me sick, you an' yore mules! You act like yore mules an' yore old cracker-box of a wagon was important, really worth somethin'. My li'l' black hoss tops 'em by——"

"Yore li'l' black hoss! Yore li'l' black accordeen you mean. It ain't even as good as an accordeen. An accordeen'll play tunes, an' that hoss— Why, all that hoss is good for is to bite folks. He bit me yes'day aft'noon, an'——"

"Bit yuh, did he?" interrupted Red in a grieved tone. "I was wonderin' what made him so sick last night. The poor li'l' feller. You'd oughtn't to tantalize round him that way. Don't you do it no more, Tom, after I get him back. I don't aim to have my hosses made dyspeptics for life through bitin' chunks out o' you. Nawsir, I can't have it, Tom, 'deed I can't. You be careful now, won'tcha, an' leave the poor hoss be?"

The stung Tom retorted profanely. Red listened admiringly. His brother's grasp of vivid utterance never failed to impress him.

"That's great," approved Red when Tom paused for breath. "You done better'n yuh did the last time, remember, when yuh fell over that box o' can' tomatters in the dark and fetched up with yore face against the stove. Mule-skinnin' shore does help a gent thataway, don't it?"

Thus the time passed profitably till they came to the old K C ranch-house under Sweetwater Mountain. They approached the place carelessly. But one look at the corral brought them alive with a jerk. Horses were visible through the stockade.

"What are you doin'?"

There was more than a hint of amusement in the soft voice that spoke from the kitchen window of the ranch-house. Both men turned swiftly in their saddles. Red, at sight of the horses in the corral, had pulled his six-shooter. Now, confronted by a very good-looking girl, he slid the gun back into its holster and hoped she hadn't seen him pull it. But she had. Her snapping black eyes twinkled at him.

"I'm not considered dangerous," she announced in a delicious drawl, putting up a sunburnt hand to push back a mop of curly black hair. "Your friend needn't worry!" she added significantly.

"He ain't my friend," apologized Red, removing his hat. "He's my brother, an' he ain't always accountable." Here he kicked his brother on the ankle, adjuring him in a fierce whisper to put away his six-shooter.

Tom, who had been, as he said later, "struck all of a heap" to find the old K C ranch occupied by a woman, hastily holstered his gun and wiggled an agonized ankle.

"Were you lookin' for anythin'?" inquired the girl.

"No, ma'am, no, not a-tall," disclaimed Red Kane.

"We was just passin' by," amplified Tom Kane, meanwhile endeavoring to snatch an unobtrusive look at the animals in the corral.

"You don't have to twist around so and rub your ear and all in order to look into the corral," the girl said kindly. "Ride

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right up to the gate and enjoy yourself. Don't mind me."

Red Kane laughed outright. Tom looked rather sour. Confound the woman. She was too observing by half.

"I—I—they—we—we lost some hosses," he stuttered, "an' we thought maybe they might 'a' strayed over here."

"I suppose that's why you tried to look into the corral instead of asking me straight out whether I'd seen them," observed the girl, ceasing abruptly to twinkle.

"Oh, no, ma'am, no," Tom hastened to assure her, but his effort was not convincing.

The girl nodded, eying him steadily.

"You don't do it well," she remarked indifferently.

"Ma'am," said Red Kane, "you mus'n't mind Tom. He's always been the fool o' the family. I'm beggin' yore pardon for him. You see, they's been a robbery over to Farewell, an' fifty thousand dollars an' two hosses are missin'. I was just a-wonderin' if yuh'd seen anybody ride by this mornin' or afternoon."

"Not a soul," she told him and began again to twinkle her black eyes. "I wish father was home. He might have met somebody, although he didn't mention it at dinner. He's out on the range now. One of our horses has strayed."

"An' he's huntin' it," observed Tom Kane.

"He is," said the girl. "Why don't you wait till he rides in? Maybe he could help you out."

"Good idea," nodded Tom. "We will."

He dismounted, loosened cinches, watered his horse in the tiny brook running from the spring behind the house and made himself comfortable in the shade of a cottonwood. Red remained in the saddle. He looked after his brother, whimsical disapproval written large upon his countenance.

"Tom never did have no manners," he confided to the girl. "Then again, he don't like ladies, Tom don't. Outside o' that, he's all right, if he is my brother."

"That's a strong-lookin' pony," said the girl critically, ignoring Red's persiflage.

"He is," nodded Red, "but he ain't nothin' to my li'l' black the bandits rustled. That was a hoss. If I ever catch the sports that run him off, I'll shore make 'em hard to find. I guess I'll just water this feller if you don't mind."

He nodded to her, put on his hat, rode to the brook and allowed his mount an even ten swallows. Then he rode back to the kitchen. The girl had deserted the window for the doorway. She stood with her arms folded across the breast of her man's flannel shirt and watched him with bright, alert eyes.

"You're careful of a horse," she said, smiling up at him. "Ten's all I allow when they're hot, too, but people as a rule don't care much. They think a cow-pony'll stand anythin'."

"People are careless," he told her, dismounting and crooking his arm round the saddlehorn. "Awful careless. Sometimes they're careless in what they say—an' do—an' hurt folks' feelin's without meanin' to."

She nodded. She caught his meaning perfectly.

"I don't believe you've looked in our corral yet," said she.

"I don't need to—now," was his answer.

"How do you know I'm not a bold, bad horse-thief? I might be. I might have stolen the fifty thousand, too. You don't know. They say a nester will do anythin'."

A certain bitterness underlay her tone and words. It would seem that nestering, for this curly-headed girl, had not been an easy path to follow. Red Kane looked straight into her black eyes.

"I never said nothin' about nesters," he declared.

"You're a cow-man like all the rest. At least, I suppose you're a cow-man."

"I'm a puncher all right, but I believe in livin' an' lettin' live. She's a free country."

"Some folks seem to think differently."

"Some folks always do. Wouldn't be a human world if they didn't. You got a right nice li'l' place here."

This was the boldest flattery, for a more dilapidated residence than the K C ranch-house would be difficult to find. The roof had fallen in at one end, and every window lacked glass. The kitchen door hung slantingly from one leather hinge, and the weather-worn skeleton of a cow that had died of big jaw gleamed whitely through the tall grass beside the kitchen chimney.

The girl looked sharply at Red. But there was no sarcasm in the puncher's expression. He had merely meant to be polite.

"I'll have it lookin' like somethin' in time," she said. "Haven't had much chance yet. We only pulled in yester-

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day. The wagons aren't all unloaded yet."

"All?"

"We've two wagons—and there's just the two of us, dad and I. Funny, isn't it?"

"Funny? Why, I dunno——"

"I can tell just what you're thinkin' about, Mr. Man. Your face is like big print. You're wonderin' about us. Two wagons, and nesters usually have but one and a pair of three-legged crow-baits cuddlin' the pole, and nothin' much to do with, take 'em all around. I wonder are these folks all right. That's what you're thinkin'. I can tell. Can't fool me." The girl threw up her chin and laughed a hard, mirthless laugh. "You citizens are the most suspicious lot I ever saw," she continued. "You think nobody has a right on earth but your own high and mighty selves. He's a nester, is he? Rub him out, if it can be done legally or half-legally. Run off his cattle and horses, anyway. Make trouble for him till he has to pick up and move again. But I guess we're here to stay, Mr. Man."

She stared at him defiantly. Taken aback by her outburst, he essayed a grin.

"I hope yuh do stay, ma'am. I'd be shore sorry to see yuh go. I dunno why yuh think yuh won't be treated right here."

"Do you know the 88 ranch?" she asked abruptly. "We came by there, and the manager was pretty disagreeable."

"Lanpher, huh? He's that manager feller. Don'tcha care what he says. He's so tight across the chest he can't unbutton his vest, and he's too mean to catch cold. He even hates himself, the lizard. Don't-cha think o' him a-tall. We don't."

"I see. Well, you can go on about your business whenever you feel like it, you and your brother."

Red's surprized jaws dropped with almost an audible click.

"I thought you asked us to stay till your father got home," he puzzled.

"I did. I didn't know then what I know now, and I don't want you round any longer. Slide, the two of you. Go on back to Lanpher and tell him 'Dot' Lorimer said to come himself next time."

WITH the words she reached behind the door and brought out a Winchester and trained the firearm on Red Kane's stomach. Tom Kane got hastily to his feet. Red did not move.

"You by the spring," said the girl, not removing her eyes from Red's amazed face, "climb on your horse and wander. One wrong move and your brother gets a pill."

Red Kane hooked his thumbs over his hat.

"Ma'am," he cried, "would you mind tellin' me, before I go, why you said, 'Go back to Lanpher?' "

"Because you're one of his men. Now get——"

"But I ain't. What makes yuh think I am?"

"Don't lie to me. Get aboard and get a-goin'. I've fooled with you long enough. Drag it."

Without another word Red Kane swung up and followed his departing brother.

"Nice sociable lady," sputtered Tom Kane when Red joined him. "You'd think we was bandits or somethin'. I'll bet she'd 'a' plugged yuh, Red, if yuh'd wiggled yore ear at her."

"Shore she would," agreed Red. "She had the old cannon headed straight where my dinner's gonna be an' her finger on the trigger. Yessir, she's shore a jim hicky, that girl."

Tom Kane caught at the enthusiasm in Red's tone.

"You act like she'd done somethin' amusin', instead o' offerin' to blow yore lights out." Tom's voice was a raucous snarl.

"Well, they was my lights, an' still are," Red said equably. "I like her spirit, I do. Gimme a girl with git-up-an'-git to her every time."

"Yo're welcome to her— This way, Red, if we're goin' down between Sweetwater an' the Sandy Hills—I don't want nothin' to do with her myself."

"You wouldn't stand no show with her, anyhow. Whadda you know about women?"

"Nothin', thank Gawd, an' I don't wanna, neither. I got sense thataway. You go fussin' round a woman, an', before yuh know it, yo're in love with her, an' next yuh know yo're married. Then you are up a stump."

"Oh, I dunno. A feller might be a lot worse off than married."

"Yeah, he might be dead."

"You dunno. You never was either."

"An' I'm gonna claw free o' both while I got my health. Whadda you guess made

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her search out her gun, anyway? I was watchin' the pair of yuh, an' I didn't see you do nothin'."

"I didn't. I was just talkin' to her, an' all of a sudden she sort o' looked past me, an' her eyes got hard. Next I knowed she was holdin' the gun on me an' tellin' me what to do."

"Looked past yuh?"

"Shore—over my shoulder like."

"What at?"

"How'd I know—by ——!" Red jerked his horse to a sliding halt and slid to the ground. "Look at that!" he exclaimed, pointing at the name and brand carved on the front of the saddle's cantle. "'Jack Owens, 88'. This here is Jack Owens' old saddle, an' I never thought. O' course she got suspicious prompt an' sudden when she seen that. I dunno," he added, mounting and wheeling his horse, "but what I'll go back an' tell her it's all a mistake."

"I would!" cried his brother, as a puff of gray smoke clouded across the kitchen doorway of the ranch-house and a bullet buzzed by overhead. "I shore would if I was you! The range ain't over eight hundred yards, an' the next piece o' lead might not flip past up yonder. It might sift through yore thick head. I'm tellin' yuh that female means business."

"Aw, she ain't to blame!" protested Red, reluctantly turning his horse's head. "Appearances is against us."

"An' she's shore agreein' with appearances steady an' strong. There goes another."

A bullet kissed the earth twenty yards to the left, struck a rock and ripped off at an acute angle with a high shrill whine.

"Ain't she a jo-darter?" grinned Red, chin on shoulder, looking back at the ranch-house as he jogged along.

"I dunno what she is," Tom Kane said disgustedly, "but I know yo're a fool. 'Fore I'd let a female jerk me down thataway! Why, one minute after you seen her, you forgot what you was doin'. You even forgot yore li'l' black hoss. Yes, yuh did. Can't tell me yuh didn't. Yuh didn't even try to look in the corral after she spoke.'

"I didn't need to, but I'm gamblin' you did."

"You better believe I did. I ain't lettin' no curly hair tangle up my eyesight."

"Yuh didn't see the rustled hosses in the corral, didja?"

"Naturally not, or I would 'a' said so. They was eight hosses in that corral, all collar-marked. D Both Ways right hip was the iron on two of 'em. Couldn't see the others. They was headin' wrong."

"Seein' they was all team hosses, you was a heap disappointed, huh?"

"I didn't say so."

"Yuh didn't have to. Yuh looked it, old sour-ball. Tom, yore milk o' human kindness is all addled up. Sometimes I wonder can this mistrustin', fault-findin' undertaker with the face long like a pony's be my brother. Yessir, that shore bothers me a lot sometimes."

"Nemmine about my milk o' human kindness. I don't go spillin' it round promiscuous like other folks I know of. Nesters, an' you a cow-man!"

"Not nesters, nester, frosty-face. I dunno nothin' against Paw Lorimer, but Miss Dot Lorimer is shore the one for my money. Yessir, Tom, y' ol' coffee-cooler, that's the li'l lady I'm gonna marry."

Tom gulped, gasped, ran two fingers round the inside of his collar, rubbed both ears and shook his head vigorously.

"Somethin's gone wrong with my hearin'," he announced after an anxious moment. "I shore thought you said that nester lady was the one you was gonna marry."

"You heard right." Red placidly eyed his brother.

"There, I'm hearin' funny noises again," Tom cried in alarm.

"You ain't hearin' no funny noises, feller. Yo're hearin' the truth. I ain't surprized yuh don't know it: yuh use it so seldom."

Tom ignored the slander.

"Yuh don't like her already!" he exclaimed. "Yuh can't! Why, yuh just seen her. Aw, ——, Red, whatsa matter with yuh? Are yuh crazy?"

"Yeah, I'm crazy—crazy like a fox. You heard me, I'm gonna marry that girl. She dunno it yet, but she will."

"That's good. You'll tell her before yuh marry her, huh? She'd like to know maybe. Women are funny thataway."

"An' yo're tryin' to be an' makin' a boggy ford of it. Listen here, Tom, I'm tellin' yuh about this, but I'm expectin' yuh to keep it behind yore front teeth, see."

"Don'tcha fret, I ain't anxious to have folks know what a —— fool they is in the

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family. Nawsir, not me. I'll never tell. I'll keep it under my hat same's if it was fits or web-feet."

CHAPTER IV

THE NESTER

"WE DIDN'T find no tracks round Sweetwater," said Red, reporting to Kansas Casey in the sheriff's office at Farewell. "We scouted past that gap between the mountain and the Sandy Hills, too, but we didn't find one smidgin' of a track. Did any o' the others find anythin'?"

"They did not, nary a find. She's a mystery. Here we was out four days an' rode our hosses down to whispers an' no luck a-tall. An' three days ago, while we was gone, two sports held up the stage south o' Injun Ridge an' went through the passengers."

"Kill anybody?"

"Naw, but they got five watches an' about a thousand dollars, which ain't a bad ten minutes' work, even countin' in the risk."

"Who was ridin' shotgun?"

"Nobody. They wasn't carryin' no box that trip. An' the bandits expected a box, too, an' give everybody aboard a cussin' 'cause she wasn't there. Looks like old times shore once again."

"They's a-plenty cottonwoods," Red observed dryly, "an' we all got ropes."

"You'll be needin' 'em before we're through; not that I hold with lynchin', officially speakin', me bein' a deputy sheriff as duly made and provided, but I got my own idea o' what's the best cure for the road-agent business."

"Didja tell Kansas about the nesters?" inquired Tom Kane, looking up from his task of greasing wagon-wheels as his brother scuffed round the corner of the house.

"Shore not," replied Red, sitting down on a handy case. "Question: What business is it o' his? Answer: Why, no business a-tall. Got the makin's?"

"They're in the shack, but nemmine about no makin's now. Gimme a hand with these wheels, you lazy cow-wrastler, instead o' sittin' there a-wearin' out my packin'-cases with the seat o' yore pants. There's the wrench, an' there's a box o' axle-dope. Hop to it, feller."

"Lordy," groaned Red, "don't I never get a chance to rest?"

"Not around me, yuh don't. When yuh goin' back to the Bar S?"

"When Piney Jackson gets the buckboard fixed. He ain't got a light wheel in stock, an' he's gotta make all new spokes. Piney knows how to charge, too. Old Salt'll roar like a bull when he gets the bill. He'll make out it's all my fault somehow."

"Betcha he tries to take it out o' yore wages," was Tom's bright suggestion.

"Tryin' an' doin ain't even in the same corral. Aw, Old Salt's all right so long's yuh watch him."

"So's a mule. Yuh'll never screw on the nut thataway, Red. It's a left-hand thread. Don'tcha know nothin'?"

In this wise the wheel-greasing proceeded to a successful close and the driven Red fled to the Blue Pigeon store. Here he found Kansas Casey deep in conversation with Mike Flynn, the proprietor.

"I'm feelin' a heap proud today," Red announced, grinning at the two men, "an' I guess I'll buy me a shirt. I always gotta buy somethin' when I feel proud."

"You ain't got nothin' to be proud about," Kansas said seriously. "Do you see anythin' he's got to be proud of, Mike?"

"Wait till after I sell him his shirt," smiled the Irishman. "Any partic'lar kind, Red?"

"They's one yonder on the fourth shelf right behind yuh looks kind o' good. Yeah, that one. Them li'l' purple hoss-shoes sprinkled all over the gray makes it look a heap festive, don't it?"

"——, yes," asserted Kansas. "All you need now is a yaller hankercher round yore neck an' leave yore hat off an' folks will shore see sunset a-comin'."

"Nemmine about my hair. I know she's red, an' that's a good color—lucky, too. Only the best people has red hair. If yuh'll notice, they ain't so many of us, but what they is is fine strain an' corn-fed, y' betcha. Lookit me now. Where'll you find a better feller, take him all round, huh? I'm askin' yuh, an' yuh can't answer. No, o' course not."

"How strong the breeze is today, Mike," observed Kansas. "They must be a window open some'ers."

"They is," said Red. "Several. All yuh gotta do is lay back an' enjoy it. She's free, all free. Yuh'd oughta appreciate it,

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'stead o' prancin' round makin' remarks. Ain't that so, Mike? Nemmine, don't answer. Maybe he might hold it against yuh an' go over to Calloway's for his makin's. How much didja say that shirt was? Two dollars four-bits, huh? Here y' are. If she wears out under a year, I'll lay for yuh an' burn the store."

"Lemme know when you're comin'," Mike requested serenely. "Hello, Tom."

"'Lo, Mike." Tom, entering, looked hard at the newspaper-wrapped bundle under his brother's arm. "Bet he's done one o' two things, Red has—he's either bought one shirt or two."

"One," tattled Kansas. "Ain't he the spendthrift?"

"He's worse'n that," Tom averred, fixing his brother with a gloomy stare. "A shirt! A new shirt! It must be true. He's a goner."

"Web-feet an' fits! Web-feet an' fits!" Red bawled to head him off.

"That's what it is, all right," grunted Tom, and he marched out, rank disapproval in every line of his stiff back.

Kansas Casey seized the lobe of his right ear and moved it slowly to and fro.

"You like to deefened me with yore 'web-feet an' fits,'" he told Red. "Next time you go to whirlin' yore voice, whirl her the other way. An' what is 'web-feet an' fits,' anyhow?"

"Whatcha wanna know for? Didja lose any?"

At this point diversion was created by the entrance of a stranger. He was a long, lean citizen, this stranger, with lank black hair, sharp blue eyes and bat ears. He wore two guns and an air of great alertness.

The bat-eared one leaned hip-shot against the counter and nodded to Mike Flynn.

"Got any Winchester .75's?" he asked.

"Shore."

"I'll take four boxes o' them an' six for my Colts, same caliber, an'——"

Here the bat-eared man was interrupted by a strange and raucous voice squawking:

"Help! Help! Don't kill me! Gimme that ax! Oh, my Gawd in heaven! That's right! Cut her yellow throat! What you think it that feller him got? Two dead men lib for beach! What's the odds! Stick her again! She stole my watch! Murder! Murder! Murder! Gawd bless our home and make me a good boy! Get outa here, you dirty dog!"

At the first words uttered by the raucous voice, the bat-eared man sprang backward a yard and drew both guns. Crouching forward, his narrow-slitted eyes swept the counter. Muscles in cheek and jaw quivered tensely.

Marked interest flickered in the eyes of Kansas Casey and Red Kane. They watched the bat-eared man curiously. From behind the counter Mike Flynn smiled reassuringly at the bat-eared man and flung up a hand, palm pacifically outward.

"If yo're gonna shoot," calmly remarked Mr. Flynn, "I'd take it kindly if yuh'd p'int them carronades outdoors."

The bat-eared man straightened slowly. His gaze did not waver from the eyes of Mike Flynn. Realizing that hostilities were unwarranted, the bat-eared gentleman slid his guns into their hostlers.

"I been sick," vouchsafed the bat-eared one quietly. "I ain't all well yet—not complete. Still nervous—sometimes. What made that —— noise?"

Mike Flynn stooped behind the counter and groped purposefully among cans. When he straightened, there roosted on his doubled fist a parrot, green and red, with a mild and filmy eye. The bird stared solemnly about him. Balancing on one foot, he scratched his head and giggled.

"I saw yer steal the whisky," the parrot observed in his raucous but remarkably human voice. "I'll tell Tom, I will. I'll wring yer neck, see if I don't! 'Alf an' 'alf! Gimme a kiss! I love yer! Cross my heart! Grab her! Grab her! Kill the cop! Kill the cop! There goes the window! Don't let her get away! Smash her face in and throw her out in the alley! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Gawd bless my soul! Who's a good boy? I am!"

The parrot ceased talking and with its beak proceeded industriously to search the back of its neck. A slight smile parted the thin lips of the bat-eared man. He pushed back his hat and rubbed a wide forehead.

"Ain't she the hellion?" chuckled Mike Flynn, tickling the parrot between the eyes. "She shore knows a lot, Percival does."

"She? Percival?" The bat-eared one stared inquiringly at Mike Flynn.

"She thinks she's a boy," explained Mike, "but I know better. The first thing she done after gittin' in from the Coast was lay an egg in me hat. She has no morals, the crayture."

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"I can lick yer with one hand!" screamed the parrot. "And I will if yer don't shut up! Oh, my Gawd, you've killed her! I told yer not to use a knife! Hurrah for the bloody duster!"

"She's seen life, has Percival," smiled Mike Flynn, "an' death, too, I'm thinkin'. There, yuh divil, in wit' yuh."

He tossed the bird through the open door of the cage on a shelf at his back, closed the door and pulled a black cloth over the cage.

"There now," he continued, "she'll kape quiet. Anythin' else besides the cartridges, mister?"

"Twenty-four can tomatters an' six boxes matches," replied the bat-eared man, now wholly at his ease. "Got any milk, Hyacinth brand, huh? Aw right, four cans an' ten pounds o' coffee. Any candy, have yuh?"

"Dozen pails came in this mornin'—chocolates an' hard candies, half an' half."

"I'll take a pail o' the chocolate. My daughter likes chocolate candies, she does. An' yuh might wrap up three—four pounds peppermint sticks. Them striped like a barber's pole. She likes them, too. I guess that'll be about all."

Kansas Casey, sitting on the counter and swinging spurred heels, looked idly out into dusty Main Street.

WHEN the bat-eared man departed with his purchases, Kansas Casey was still looking through the doorway. He watched the bat-eared man drop his bulging sack behind the seat of an extremely sway-backed buckboard and make it fast with a lariat. He watched the man untie his team, heave his lanky body into the seat and drive away. In the light of recent events Kansas Casey had more than a passing interest in strangers.

"Who's that, Mike?" he asked.

"I never seen him before," was the Irishman's answer. "I did hear how they was a nester throwed down over near Sweetwater Mountain. Maybe it's him."

"Maybe. I heard o' that nester, too. Do you know this gent, Red?"

"Who? Me?" Kane replied carelessly. "I guess maybe it might be him—that nester, yuh can't tell. Name's Lorimer, or somethin' like that."

"Oh," said Kansas Casey, and he appeared to reflect. "Kind o' loosened up on the language after Percival made his li'l' speech, didn't he?"

"Shore did. He was sort o' dumb an' dumpish-like before." Thus Red Kane, extracting his tobacco from a shirt pocket.

"Guess maybe he must 'a' been right serious sick to have nerves that bad, the poor fellah," Mike said with a wink.

"Yeah, I guess—I guess maybe." Kansas Casey did not glance at Mike Flynn. He looked fixedly at the toes of his own boots.

"Aw, he's all right," declared Red Kane warmly.

"Who said he wasn't?" Kansas Casey looked hard at Red Kane.

"Well, yuh don't have to say much to mean a whole lot."

"Which goes double," grinned Kansas. "What was that he said about his daughter?"

"Daughter?" Red Kane exclaimed in a surprized tone. "Did he say anythin' about a daughter?"

"Didn't he, Mike?"

"Shore did. Bought the candy for her, he said."

"Le's you'n me go get a drink, Red," suggested Kansas, slipping to the floor with a thud and a jangle.

"We'll get two drinks," amended Red Kane, following his friend to the street. "Where yuh goin', Kansas? That ain't the way to the Happy Heart."

"Nemmine about that drink—now. This here freight wagon is where we're a-goin', an' we're gonna sit on the tongue, you'n me together, an' yo're gonna tell me secrets."

"You've got 'em unusual bad today, Kansas," Red assured him seriously. "I always knowed, if yuh kept on a-lappin' it up an' a-lappin' it up all same sponge, yuh'd go loco. An' yuh have, an' yuh've went."

"Whadda yuh know about that jigger Lorimer, Red?" inquired Kansas, coming straight to the point.

"Who? Me?" Kane elevated surprized eyebrows.

"Yuh done said 'Who? Me?' before. Change hosses, Red. It's 'What? Him?' "

"Oh, yeah, o' course, shore, an' all like that. Whadda yuh think I am, a cyclophobia? I dunno all the nesters in the country, do I?"

Red Kane glared indignantly at Kansas Casey. The latter grinned back.

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"Don't tell me," said Kansas. "Yuh've seen that daughter, anyhow. Don't try to tell me different. Why didja stick up for him there in the Blue Pigeon less yuh had some reason?"

"I might have lots o' reasons—whole herds o' reasons, an' none of 'em yore business."

"There yuh go gettin' mad just 'cause I hinted this gent wasn't maybe always a holy Christian."

"I ain't gettin' mad!" Red denied vigorously.

"Then whatcha gettin' all red about?" jibed Kansas. "The daughter, what's she like? Hell's bells, ain't I yore best friend? Don't yuh glom all my tobacco alla time? Don't I ride yore hosses for yuh an' bust 'em gentle when you ain't able? Shore I do—all that an' more. An' here yuh turn me down cold. Yo're a suspicious cuss, Red. Always lookin' on the black side. Never trust nobody, you don't. I'll bet you think I really wanna go over to Sweetwater Mountain an' cut yuh out or somethin'."

"I ain't never been to Lorimer's ranch but once, not that she's any o' yore business like I said previous."

"She's a wide, free world, an' I ain't sayin' yuh know Lorimer—I don't think yuh do, or yuh'd 'a' spoke there in the store—but yuh've done met up with the girl some'ers."

"What if I have?" Red's eyes steadily held those of Kansas.

"Oh, nothin'; only I'd like yuh to see somethin' I got in the office."

Kansas led the way to the sheriff's office. The office was the front room of the sheriff's house. Jack Rule, the sheriff of Fort Creek County, was abroad on business. But it was not his custom to lock either his house or his home-made desk.

Kansas opened the wide desk-drawer. From the drawer he drew a sheaf of notices. Leafing through them rapidly, he found that which he sought and handed it to Red Kane.

Clipped of legal verbiage, the notice set forth that one John Hudson was wanted for rustling and horse-stealing, said heinous crimes having been committed in Lang County. The notice bore a date three years old. It likewise carried a fairly comprehensive list of John Hudson's salient characteristics. One of these points of interest was a bushy black beard.

"Lorimer ain't got no beard," objected Red Kane.

"They's such a thing as shavin'," suggested Kansas Casey. "It has been done. If you'd do it, it would help yore face, Red."

Red told Kansas where he could go and laid the notice on the desk.

"You can't prove nothin' by this notice," said Red Kane. "Besides, I don't believe he done it, anyway."

"She must be a shore good-looker."

"What's that gotta do with it?" wrathfully.

"Nothin', nothin' a-tall. I was just gonna say that I guess I'd better climb on my rockin'-hoss an' slide out after this stranger an' sort o' look round where he goes. Whadda you guess?"

"Yo're on the wrong range, I keep tellin' yuh! Why, Kansas, she wouldn't let him do nothin' out o' the way. I know she wouldn't. Aw, you make me sick! Yo're a reg'lar he-wolf! Yuh needn't stand there grinning' like a chessy-cat. Yuh needn't go pokin' fun neither. You know —— well I ain't no more like to help out a hoss-thief than you are. But they ain't no hoss-thieves in the Lorimer outfit; you can gamble on that."

"Alla same, here's this man Lorimer a dead ringer for the sharp in this notice, leavin' out the beard, o' course. They's the same thin lips, straight nose, black eyes, black hair, six-feet-two or thereabout, weight a hundred an' seventy-five, quick in his movements an' on the trigger. What more do yuh want? Don't it all fit?"

"It might fit a description o' you," said Red sharply. "Yore lips ain't thick; yore nose ain't crooked; you got black hair an' eyes; yore weight is between one seventy an' one eighty, an' you move quick. Comin' right down to cases, why don't yuh arrest yoreself on suspicion?"

"Look here—" began Kansas.

"Goin' farther," interrupted Red, "they's Daly right here in town. He fills out that description same's you do. They's Dunlavy, the Wells Fargo agent at Marysville. How about him?"

"Aw, ——, we all know they didn't do it. We know they're honest."

"How do we know they're honest any more'n we know this here stranger is dishonest?"

"Well, he's a nester, this feller," was

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Kansas Casey's undeniably lame answer.

"You dunno he's a nester. He may be, an' he may not. Yuh dunno nothin' about him."

"If you don't think he is, why you fightin' so hard for him?"

"Fair play. What else?"

At which Kansas Casey was moved to smile, for he had never known Red Kane to be so public-spirited. But he did not smile. Instead he picked up the Lang County notice and reread it.

"Here," said he suddenly, pointing to a line of fine print at the very bottom of the page, "we missed this, Red. It says here John Hudson has a knife scar on his right arm half-way between elbow an' shoulder. That's how we're gonna tell whether this stranger is our John Hudson or not."

"Yore John Hudson," corrected Red Kane acidly. "I got nothin' to do with this, an' yuh can stick a pin in that."

"That's all right. Le's wander."

CHAPTER V

THE COTTONWOOD

"HERE'S where he left the trail," said Kansas Casey, glancing up from the wheel marks and turning his horse to follow them. "Strikin' off due east. Go yuh ten he's the Sweetwater gent, Red."

But Red Kane shook his head. He was too uncomfortable in his mind to even smoke. He was not a susceptible person. Far from it. But Miss Dot Lorimer had hit him hard. He had never seen any one quite like her before. That his wages were forty a month and "found" troubled him not at all. His was a hopeful soul, and the age was a hopeful age. A strong man, provided he kept his head, could go far. With Dot Lorimer as his wife, Red Kane saw himself making regular wheel ruts in the sands of time. He would save his money, buy a few cows, start a brand of his own and become a large cattleman, like his employer, Mr. Saltoun, the owner of the Bar S. He would branch out in other lines, too. All rich men did. Mines, for choice. Yes, he thought he would invest in mines and become richer. And all to the end that the curly-haired lady, his wife, might wear as many diamonds as she desired. Red Kane had an imagination indeed.

"Hey!" It was a loud, healthy roar uttered by Kansas Casey.

Red Kane lifted his gray eyes to Casey's face.

"Didja say somethin'?" he asked softly.

"Me? Oh, no, I never said nothin'. I only spoke to yuh four times, thassall."

"It's enough. Was yuh doin' it for exercise, or what?"

"I just wanted yuh to tell me the joke. You've been a-ridin' along a-grinnin' an' a-chucklin' to yoreself, an' every now an' then yuh'd slap yore leg an' laugh out loud."

"That's shore funny. I always laugh out loud. I got the habit young, an' I never got over it. Gimme the makin's, will yuh?"

Kansas Casey handed across tobacco and papers. Red Kane helped himself and handed them back.

"Wouldn't yuh like a match?" Kansas inquired sarcastically.

"No, I got one. I got tobacco an' papers too, but I wanna smoke yores up first so's I won't run short. Nothin' like lookin' ahead, is they, Kansas?"

"I've met up with gall," the other declared bitterly, "all kinds o' gall, but yores puts the hat on the climax."

"Now that's a real compliment," Red told him. "That makes me feel like life's worth livin' after all. I used to have my doubts, but not now. Just for that, old-timer, when we get back to Farewell, I'll let you buy me a drink. No, I'll let you buy me two drinks. It's worth that."

"I'll buy you some rock salt an' feed it to you through a shotgun," snarled Kansas, ostentatiously stuffing his tobacco and papers into the inside pocket of his vest.

"I'd put a padlock on that pocket if I were you," was Red's suggestion; "then yuh shore won't lose nothin'."

"I would if I had one," cried Kansas, "but then that wouldn't stop yuh if yuh really got thirsty for a smoke."

"No?" Red smiled slightly and with the butt of his quirt tickled the deputy's horse behind the saddle.

The average Western horse is touchy of his person behind the saddle. Casey's horse was a trifle more average than the average. Promptly at the flick of the brass-bound butt across his sensitive skin he tucked his tail between his hindlegs, his nose between his forelegs, humped his back and shot straight up in the air.

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Kansas lost his hat and one stirrup, but he stuck, and he did not pull leather. He belted the pony with his quirt and strove to jerk up its head. After a moment he succeeded in this, and then the curb-strap parted.

Now, a curb-bit with a broken strap is no better than the veriest snaffle. At the sudden slackening of the pressure on its lower jaw, the horse perceived the opportunity of a lifetime and seized it with all four feet. It clamped its teeth, straightened its neck and, splitting the wind with crackling nostrils, raced across country full stretch.

Red, hooting with delight, retrieved the deputy's hat and followed. At the first draw reached by the runaway Red looked to see a tumble. But the horse darted down the near side of the draw and shot across the bottom with never a stagger. Red rode more circumspectly. His mount, one of Kansas Casey's horses, was one of whose surefootedness he knew nothing.

It is not a surprizing thing that Kansas Casey was out of sight within three minutes. Red, never much of a trailer at best, followed the runaway's trail as well as he could. Twice he lost it but contrived to pick it up on the sides of another draw.

At the end of five miles of rapid going he came upon Kansas Casey and his horse in the middle of a broad flat between two hills. The horse was galloping madly in a circle. Its outblown nostrils flared red. Its breathing was audible at two hundred yards. Kansas was swaying back on one rein and whirling his quirt cross-handed.

"I'll teach yuh to run away!" Kansas was gritting between his teeth. "I lay yore ribs'll look like a plowed field when I get through with yuh."

Eight rounds of the flat and the horse gave it up. It stood with hanging head, its flanks heaving in and out like blacksmith's bellows. Kansas curled his reins round the saddlehorn, breathed long and deeply and wiped his dripping face with his sleeve. He looked about him. His eye fell on Red grinning at him not thirty feet away.

"Yo're a fine Injun!" cried Kansas hotly. "Oh, yo're a bird, you are. Why didn'tcha tell me yuh was gonna play a trick like that?"

"It wouldn't have been a trick if I had," smiled Red. "Anyway, yuh ain't got no business ridin' if yuh can't control yore hoss. Lordy, it shore was funny to see yuh a-bobbin' up an' down thataway. Why, Kansas, I'll bet if I seen yore hoss's ears under yuh once, I seen 'em forty times. Wasn't the saddle comfortable, or what?"

"Yo're a —— liar," said Kansas, taking advantage of the fact that one may call a friend a liar and not be shot in the process. "Yuh couldn't 'a' slid a piece o' paper under me once."

"I dunno about no pieces of paper, but a pile o' books four feet high wouldn't 'a' had no trouble in doin' the trick. Naw, sir."

"Well, anyway," growled Kansas in injured tones, for he really had been severely shaken up, "yuh hadn't oughta played a trick like that. Yuh might 'a' busted my neck."

"No such luck," denied Red in all seriousness, "yo're too mean to do a thing like that. I wish yuh wouldn't speak so cruel to yore li'l' Reddy, who didn't mean no harm an' is only doin' his level best to get along peaceful as possible in this vale o' tears."

Red Kane, affecting to wipe his eyes, edged nearer to Kansas Casey.

"Nemmine comin' no closer!" cried Kansas, backing his horse hurriedly. "I ain't a-trustin yuh one inch! Yo're too gayful today to suit me entirely. Gimme my lid."

Red sailed the hat toward him. Kansas caught it on the fly, clapped it on his head and wheeled his horse.

"Gotta go back where we came from an' pick up the buckboard's trail again," he grumbled. "Just lookit the time we lose 'cause yuh had to play the fool. Honest, Red, sometimes I feel like gettin' mad with yuh."

"Don't do it. The last gent who done that died, poor feller. Yuh dunno, yuh might be the next; yuh can't tell."

"I'm shore scared to death— Say, hear that?"

"That" was a shot once repeated. It seemed to come from behind the more eastern of the two hills flanking the flat.

"I hear somebody a-bawlin' 'Help,'" asserted Red Kane.

"Yore ears are better'n mine," said Kansas. "Hop to it."

They rounded the broad hill's foot at a lope, for the horses had not completely recovered their breath. Behind the hill,

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where the cottonwoods grow on the banks of Cow Creek, they came upon the man who had fired the shots and called for help.

THE WAS the bat-eared stranger of the Blue Pigeon, and he was lying crumpled in the midst of the smashed wreck of a buckboard. A dead cottonwood was lying across his body. In his hand was a revolver. Beyond the buckboard the two-horse team stood quietly.

Red and Kansas slid to the ground, flung the reins over their horses' heads and set to work. Between the two of them, strong men both, they levered up the cottonwood and slid it to earth. Then they lifted out the bat-eared man—he had fainted at their first taking hold upon the cottonwood—and laid him on the grass. Superficially at least the man had suffered damage. His head was cut; his chest was cut; his right arm was scraped, torn and bleeding, from shoulder to wrist.

"——," muttered Kansas regretfully, eying the injured arm.

"They's no tellin' about that scar on the arm now," said Red Kane with something like relief in his voice. "You'll have to wait."

"I know it, but yuh needn't look so happy. We gotta tie him up. He's bleedin' pretty healthy. Wonder if he's hurt inside."

"Looks like he might be. You get water from the creek, Kansas, an' I'll fix up a bandage for him."

When Kansas returned from the creek with a hatful of water, Red, a series of white strips across one knee, was squatting beside the senseless man.

Dipping into Casey's hat with his own neck-handkerchief, Red Kane deftly washed clean the jagged cuts and tears. Then he bound them up tidily with strip after strip of the white stuff draped across his knee.

Kansas watched him, idly at first, then with suddenly awakened interest as he glimpsed a hem with buttonholes adorning the side of one of the strips. He arose hastily and went to his saddle and searched through his saddle-pockets. He came back more hastily than he had gone. And he did not cease to call upon strange gods. Red Kane looked placidly up at him.

"Whatsamatter?" queried Red Kane.

"Whatsamatter? Whatsamatter?" choked out the thoroughly provoked Kansas. "I'd ask whatsamatter! I'd tell a man, I would. You purple pirate, you done took my shirt, my white shirt, the only white shirt I got, an' tore it all up for bandages."

"What right you got to a white shirt, I'd like to know?" demanded Red, shaking a lean finger at him. "You got nerve wearin' white shirts. You ain't a minister nor a undertaker, an' you got a white shirt. Why, Kansas, when I looked in yore saddle pockets an' seen that shirt, I shore thought she must 'a' crawled in there by mistake. I never had no idea you was the owner. So it was yores, huh?"

"Yes, it was mine, an' you'll get me another, or I'll shore crawl yore hump a few! You can't run no blazers on me, you long-legged rooster!"

"Lordy, Kansas, yo're shore hard to please. Why, if I hadn't 'a' used yore shirt, I'd 'a' had to use mine. Think o' that an' be happy."

Kansas opened his mouth to reply, but the injured man spoke first.

"I'm obliged to yuh for takin' the forest off my neck," said he in a weak voice.

"No trouble a-tall," grinned Red. "Lucky we heard yuh shootin' an' shoutin'."

"She was only two shots," said the other, "an' that one yell was all I could manage. It's shore amazin' how a tree roostin' on yore chest-bone cuts off yore wind." He dropped his eyes to his bandaged arm. "Tied up all same invalid," he continued. "Was that pail o' candy squashed."

"Nary a squash," was Red's reassuring reply. "Missed everythin' behind the seat, that cottonwood did. I'd shore like to know how she came to drop so unlucky-like just when you was passin'. They ain't no wind."

"Hit her with the hub o' my off front wheel," explained the hurt man. "Crack she went, an' down she come. She was pretty rotten, I guess."

"Yeah," said Kansas, examining the stump. "Just punk. How yuh feelin'?"

"Tolerable," declared the other and strove to arise, but he sank back instantly, his face drawn with pain.

"Where's it the worst?" asked Red, bending over him.

"Left side, low down," whispered the man.

"Floatin' ribs, I guess," hazarded Red. "Yuh'd oughta have a doctor."

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"Don't need one," the stranger contradicted weakly. "My daughter, Dot, she's pretty good thataway. She set a busted leg for me once, an' it set grand. If I could get home, gents, I'd be all right."

"Where yuh live?"

"In the old ranch-house at the spring near Sweetwater Mountain. My name's Lorimer."

Kansas Casey could not forego a fleeting smile of satisfaction. In one premise, at least, he had been correct. Red looked woodenly at Kansas.

"Guess maybe we could sort o' fix that buckboard," said he. "The wheels an' axles are still O K. But we ain't got nothin' to cut saplin's with."

"They's a ax an' a sawr under the buckboard seat," said Lorimer. "I always carry 'em for a e-mergency. Never know what's gonna drop in this country," he added with a whimsical smile.

CHAPTER VI

JUDGE LYNCH

THEY were yet two hundred yards from the ranch-house by the spring when Miss Lorimer came running to meet them. If she recognized Red Kane, she gave no sign. She stooped above her father when the dreary makeshift of a vehicle halted, listened to his few words, ran deft hands over his body lightly, surely. She straightened her young figure, pushed the black curls out of her eyes and said:

"He has a broken rib and a badly scratched arm. I don't think he's otherwise much hurt, beyond a few bruises, perhaps. Bring him along. I'll get things ready."

She ran lithely back to the house. Red followed her flight without the slightest change of expression. He looked as stolid as a ship's figurehead. Kansas Casey stared after the lady a moment; then he looked at Red Kane. His eyes met Red's steady gray gaze. Whereupon Kansas Casey winked his off eye, stuck his tongue into his cheek and started the horses.

"I see you've changed saddles," observed the girl to Red Kane when her father was resting as comfortably as his set rib would allow him.

The two were standing at the kitchen doorway. Kansas Casey was busily engaged in chopping wood against the morrow. Red looked out to where his brother Tom's saddle hung on the corral stockade.

"Yeah." He smiled his engaging smile. "I made up my mind I wouldn't make that mistake again."

"What mistake?" Water running over ice was no colder than her tone.

"Jack Owens' saddle."

And Red went on to tell her the true story of the saddle and himself.

She did not look at him as he spoke. Instead, she gazed aloofly out across the western hills, dark against the setting sun. He could not be positive whether she believed him or not. She was certainly very beautiful standing there with the sunbeams playing redly on her face. How her black curls glistened in the glow! What would it be like to put a hand beneath her firm, round chin and tilt her head back? He wondered and, wondering, forgot that he was staring her out of countenance till she suddenly looked at him, her cheeks hot with a fire that sprang not all from the sunshine.

"You're a plausible person," she told him, giving him stare for stare the while. "You tell a fairly straight story—well strung together, as it were."

"Ma'am—" he began, a trifle hurt.

"Oh, I believe you," she drawled. "Why wouldn't I? Didn't you rescue my father and bring him home—you and your friend. It was providential that you happened to be on hand. I am a little curious to know how you happened to be on hand and how your friend happens to be a deputy sheriff. I suppose he's a deputy. He's wearing the star of one."

"I got lots o' different kinds o' friends," Red said vaguely, finding the ice brittle.

"I've noticed that—that and a certain persistency. Why were you coming out here again—with a deputy sheriff?"

The black eyes narrowed ever so little, and the voice rang a bit hard.

"I didn't say I was comin' out here," objected Red, beginning to fidget on his feet.

"I know you didn't say so. You don't have to say so in so many words. I wasn't born the day before yesterday. What are your intentions?"

"I'm gonna marry you."

It was not the reply he had meant to give. It had bounced out on the spur of the moment. The girl's cheeks grew redder. Her

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black eyes sparkled. Then she smiled unpleasantly.

"So that's your trouble," she said thoughtfully. "Do you know, I thought, when I saw your friend was a deputy, that you had gotten the law to help you evict us. But why—if you intend to marry me—why bring a deputy sheriff? Why not a minister?"

"I didn't know you'd be willin' so quick."

At that she swung her arm to box his ear. But he had moved. Her fingers swept past his nose with four inches to spare.

"Always watch a person's eyes," said he gravely, standing six feet away; "then yuh can tell what's comin'. I was watchin' yores, watchin' 'em close. They're black, all right, but they got lots o' fire in 'em." He watched her narrowly, saw that she was trembling violently and altered his tone abruptly. "Aw, be reasonable," he continued beseechingly. "Be reasonable, can't yuh? I'm meanin' every word I say."

At which naive announcement she began to laugh immoderately. He watched her in perplexity. He had heard of hysterics. Was she having them? Ought he to throw water on her or shake her? Which? He took a long breath and a step forward. As he moved, she ceased to laugh. He halted. She folded her arms and looked upon him, her expression solemn.

"You actually mean you want to marry me?" she drawled.

"Shore," he nodded.

"Why?"

"I like yore looks."

"Oh, my looks. I see. But you don't know me. I might be a most gosh-awful person for all you can tell."

"I'll take a chance." In all seriousness.

"You are a gambler. Risking your future, everything, all for the sake of black eyes and black hair and a straight nose. How do you know you'll love me, cherish me and all that after I'm gray and decrepit? Have you thought of that?"

"Whatsa use?" was the cynical reply. "I'd rather think about now. But I tell yuh this—an' I ain't foolin', not any—if I love yuh now, I'll love yuh always, an' don't yuh forget it. I ain't no kid."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Twenty-eight. Well, well, who'd 'a' thought it? Regular Methuselah, aren't you?"

"Nun—no, I dunno about that."

"Middle-aged then. We'll be charitable and call it that. And you were askin' me to be reasonable a while since, weren't you? All right, I will be. As a prospective husband, have you anythin' besides yourself and your nerve to offer your bride?"

"Ain't I enough?"

"Not for me. How large is your ranch? How many calves do you brand in the Spring?"

"Now you're talkin' scandiloovious, an' I ain't no squarehead. Ranch! Calves! Ha-ha, an' a couple o' hees. I said be reasonable, ma'am."

"It's yourself and the nerve then. I was thinkin' it might be that. I'm afraid it won't do, Mr. Methuselah. I'm a hearty eater. I like to be sure of my food. No, no, it won't do. You'll have to take yore honest heart elsewhere."

"Nary a take. I'm stickin' till you change yore mind."

"Just hold your breath till I do, my gay young friend. Why, you poor conceited fool of a pilgrim, I wouldn't marry you if you were the last man on earth. You might as well drag it so far's I'm concerned."

"But you ain't the only one concerned," objected Red Kane, meeting her hard smile with his cheerful grin. "You keep forgettin' me alla time. I'm gonna marry you, see—maybe not today or tomorrow, but some day. It don't make a bit o' differ how much you say, what you say or how you say it; she's settled. Yo're gonna marry me, just as shore as the Lord made li'l' hoptoads, an' don't you forget it."

"Whether I want to or not?" A sardonic devil leaped and danced in the depths of her black eyes.

"You'll want to," he told her confidently.

She laughed a laugh that matched her former smile in hardness. Suddenly her face fell sober.

"I suppose I'll have to listen to you," said she. "You were very decent about bringin' dad in, and you helped me set the rib. I owe you somethin' for that."

Red Kane went fiery beneath the tan.

"You don't mean that," he said quietly. "You know I ain't lookin' for pay. An' you don't have to listen to me. I'll shut up—for now, but I'm comin' round now an' then."

"It's a free country," she put in.

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" 'Cause, if I don't, somebody else will, an' I'm aimin' to be the somebody my own self."

"I've seen men here and there," she observed dispassionately. "Some were good, and some were not; a few pleased me and more didn't, and that means quite a jag of 'em first and last, but of all the hemortals I ever ran across not a single dozen ever made me so mad as you do. Good-by."

SHE turned a straight back on him and slammed the kitchen door in his face.

"She'll come round," he told himself with an assuredness he was far from feeling. "What did I tell her I was gonna marry her for? Red, yuh poor idjit, yuh've shore spilt the coffee-pot this time." He smiled a one-sided smile and rubbed an elbow with the palm of his hand. "She hadn't oughta asked me about my intentions," he continued aloud. "Nawsir, she shore oughtn't to done that."

He regarded the closed door with half-shut eyes, teetering the while on his high heels.

"I wonder now," he mused. "I wonder ——"

He dodged sidewise and wheeled, for Kansas Casey had clapped him violently on the shoulder.

"Whatcha mumblin' an' mutterin' about?" the deputy inquired curiously. "You was havin' a ——ova powwow with you an' yoreself. Can a gent horn in, or was you desirin' to be private?"

"I was," Red said pointedly, "but I dunno as it's any use goin' on with it now. I like you, Kansas. Take yuh all round, meat, hide, horns, hoofs an' taller, yo're a pretty good jigger. I don't care what folks say; I'll always give yuh a good character. Yore face may be against yuh, but yuh can't help it. You was born that way, an'——"

"Look here—" Kansas began with heat.

"I'm doin' that, an' I can't see that you've changed a bit since yuh went out to that wood-pile. If you've done butchered enough kindlin', lean on them two buckets an' sashay over to the spring an' back a few times. This'll be the first honest work yuh ever done in yore life, won't it, Kansas? Now, now, Kansas, look out! You'll choke!"

Affecting great anxiety, Red seized Kansas by the shoulders. Kansas, out of deference to the lady who he supposed was in the kitchen, must perforce whisper his opinion of Red. The effort at restraint rendered him purple. The two, wrestling, waltzed across to the corral. Suddenly Red loosed his hold.

"Hear that," said he, fending off Kansas with both hands.

"What?" demanded Kansas, lowering his arms.

"Hosses." Succinctly.

Both listened.

"There, can'tcha hear 'em?" Red demanded impatiently. "Take the cotton out o' yore ears."

"I'll stick my knuckles in yores," Kansas told him amiably. "I hear 'em now. They's a few of 'em shore comin' this way fast an' soon."

"Ten, anyway," said Red Kane.

A moment later a bunched group of horsemen appeared on a rise of ground a mile to the west. They were in a tearing hurry, these horsemen, and swept down on the ranch-house, a dusty outfit of sixteen men. They galloped up and slid to a halt.

It seemed to Red that their manner was suspiciously ostentatious. He watched them curiously. He knew them all. They were men of Farewell, every one. They nodded or spoke to him and Kansas, and it was evident that they found the presence of Kansas Casey displeasing.

"I suppose you've arrested him, Kansas," said the leader, one Carlson, a short and thickset person with a sweeping brown mustache.

Deep disappointment lay heavily in the tones of Mr. Carlson.

Kansas Casey opened innocent eyes. He stared hard at Carlson and the outfit at his horse's tail.

"Arrested who?" said Kansas Casey.

"Why, this man, Lorimer."

Red Kane puckered his forehead. Was it possible that Carlson knew of the notice from Lang County?

"What'd I wanna arrest him for?" asked Kansas Casey. "Not that it's any o' yore business whether I arrest him or not."

"O' course not," said Carlson smoothly, and he smiled a crooked smile. "Law-breakin' is none o' our business either." He looked around at the faces of his followers. "Why would it be? But, if you ain't here to arrest him, what are yuh doin' here?"

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"Which again is none o' yore business." Kansas did not raise his voice.

But it was obvious to Red that he was growing angry.

Carlson nodded. Again he looked about him at his men.

"I guess," said he. "I guess likely. Well, if you ain't gonna do nothin' with this gent, Lorimer, for robbin' the stage, I guess we will."

"You will?" Kansas said very softly. "You will?"

"Y' betcha." Carlson wagged a purposeful head, dismounted and set one hand to his rope-strap.

"I don't see no sheriff in yore bunch," Kansas said.

"No," returned Carlson, "he ain't with us today."

"An', if you figure on doin' anythin' rambunctious with that rope, you won't be with us neither," chipped in Red Kane, taking a hand in the conversation for the first time.

Carlson continued to unstrap his rope. He took it down and shook out its coils.

"I don't see nobody round here that's gonna keep me from doin' anythin' I feel like doin'." Carlson stared hardily at Red Kane.

"Think so?" grinned Red. "Well, Mr. Man, all you gotta do is open any door in this house."

Carlson laughed harshly and spat. He was not lacking in courage, this Carlson, but he knew that Red Kane was a cold proposition. So was Kansas Casey. Both were excellent shots. He himself, as leader of his crowd, would, should matters come to a crisis, indubitably be the first to die.

"Look here, they's sixteen of us," announced Carlson. "How you gonna stop us? Sixteen to two. Yo're talkin' foolish."

"Then, if we're talkin' foolish, whatcha waitin' for?" Kansas Casey inquired shrewdly.

"We don't wanna have to drill you, Kansas," explained Carlson. "Yo're a friend o' ours; so's Red——"

"I ain't," Red Kane interrupted. "Not for one li'l' minute I ain't. I ain't friends with no herd o' humans who comes squinchin' round sixteen to one to lynch folks. Yo're a real courageous outfit o' bummers—I'll say that for yuh. Where's the rest o' the town? Don't yuh know this gent might be armed? Ain'tcha takin' a long chance? I'm only surprized yuh didn't come round at night when yuh could creep up on him asleep, an'—None o' that, Carlson! Stick 'em up, quick!"

Carlson stuck them up and inwardly cursed himself for being so thoughtless as to go after his gun against a man like Red Kane. He might have known Red would be expecting that precise move.

"A derringer is shore handy," Red observed to the world at large, without removing his eyes from the face of Carlson. "Yuh can carry it right in the palm o' yore hand, an' nobody'll notice it till the right time. You didn't, didja, Carlson?"

Carlson's reply was more than vigorous.

"Guess now I must 'a' hurt Carlson's li'l' pink feelin's," mourned Red. "I'm sorry. It's all right about you gents in behind there, but, if anybody goes a-draggin' out his artillery thinkin' to down me when I ain't lookin', Carlson here will be sorrier than me. This derringer is fifty caliber an' double-barreled," he added matter-of-factly.

"Lemme do this, boys," pleaded Carlson to his nervous henchmen.

"Why not lemme?" suggested Kansas Casey. "Red, yo're too previous. Carlson, so are you. An', as for the rest o' you gents, they won't be no lynchin' here. They's a mighty sick man in this house, an' I want yuh to let him alone."

The kitchen door at Red's back opened. The girl stood in the doorway.

"If you boys intend to do any shootin'," she said quietly, "I wish you'd go away off some'ers. Your friskin' round out here has got him all excited. He can't hear what yo're sayin', and naturally he's curious. Come some other time, gentlemen, when he's better."

She nodded, smiled brightly upon them all and closed the door.

Red, at the sound of the girl's voice, had tucked the derringer out of sight beneath his armpit. Carlson had lowered his hands and clasped them with as much ease as he could muster behind his head. He hoped that the girl would think that this was a natural pose. Too late, when she had gone, he remembered that he should have removed his hat. The others had swept theirs off. Most of them were grinning idiotically and settling neckhandkerchiefs with great care. Pretty

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women are few and far between in the broken lands.

But all was not well yet. Four members of the lynching party, while imitating their comrades in the removal of their hats, were not overjoyed at the turn of affairs. The bumptiousness of Red Kane stuck in their gullets. They did not like him anyway. They never had. Fresh jigger, like all that Bar S crowd.

Durkin, Cox, Lenn and Dill, knowing each other very well, looked sidelong at the man who had outfaced them. Kansas Casey had been likewise in the outfacing. But that was different quite. Casey was a deputy sheriff.

Red Kane, unconscious of their scrutiny, shifted his feet. A gleam of yellow showed dully in the trampled grass beside his bootsoles. It was fate that the aforementioned quartette should have been watching Red at that moment.

"Looks like a goldpiece there," remarked Durkin in a voice unnecessarily loud.

"Right by yore foot—the left one," said Lenn.

Red stooped. There was a twenty-dollar goldpiece without doubt. He picked it up. Another caught his eye. Another and another. He could see no others. Red chinked the four goldpieces in the palm of his hand.

"An' me standin' right over 'em an' never knowed it," he marveled.

"They musta fell out of his pockets when we unloaded him off the buckboard," said Kansas Casey.

"Out o' his pockets, huh?" repeated Durkin. "Eight hundred dollars o' the money stole from the stage passengers was in double eagles; didja know that?"

"What of it?" demanded the truculent Red. "What's that got to do with these here four, Durkin?"

But Durkin merely grinned and patted the brass horn of his saddle. His three friends smiled evilly. Carlson looked troubled. He could have wished himself elsewhere. He was not a bad chap at heart, and he had seen the nester's daughter. One of Carlson's friends, a gentleman named Riley, voiced Carlson's own thought.

"After all," observed the gentleman named Riley, "we can't tell nothin' by them there double eagles. They's lots o' eagles. The Gov'ment makes 'em by the bar'l."

"Alla same, this had oughta be looked into," declared Cox.

"I guess," the deputy muttered, "we'll have to search the house after all. 'Sno use hollerin', Red; it's gotta be done. Don't mean nothin', anyway. It's only a formal'ty."

Kansas Casey turned and knocked upon the kitchen door.

CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC OPINION

"WHYN —— didn't yuh knock that gun out of his hand!" complained Cox, tenderly holding a bandaged forearm.

"How'd I know he had a gun?" angrily demanded Durkin. "I thought he was hurt bad from what Kansas said—busted ribs an' such—couldn't make a gun-play."

"He shore made one," said Carlson, building himself a cigaret. "An' his second shot tickled my ear so close I felt the breeze. If this Lorimer gent is as active as this when he's sick, yuh can fry me in —— if I wanna fuss with him without one awful good reason when he's well."

"That's me," chimed in Riley. "He shore is a cracker with a gun. Why, I was watchin' him when they's a flash an' a couple o' bangs from his bunk, an' Coxy's nicked. Wonder he didn't down yuh, Coxy? Bet he would 'a' if he hadn't been sort o' under the weather. That second shot was for you, too."

"I know it," grunted Cox, "—— —— his soul! I'll get him yet."

"You be sure an' bushwhack him then," advised Red Kane sarcastically, "or what'll be left o' you won't float in water. Y'oughta had better sense, Cox, than to offer to bet Durkin the stolen money was under the floor in a bull-beller yuh could hear over in Farewell. An' you standin' not ten feet from his bunk. No wonder he took a shot at yuh. Don't blame him. Serve yuh right. Yo're a —— fool, Cox, whether yuh like it or not."

"This here's my right hand," suggested Cox, "or I'd talk to yuh."

"I'll be round when it gets well," Red answered him promptly.

"Alla same, s'pose we didn't find no money besides the silver in his clo'es," said Durkin, giving Red his closest attention. "I'll bet he did help hold up that

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stage, 'an' I wouldn't be surprized none if he knowed somethin' about the express robbery."

"Yo're a liar!" cried partisan Red on general principles and reached for his gun.

His clutching fingers had barely touched the wood of the butt when a Winchester cracked behind him; burning powder grains stung his ear, and Durkin, a ragged hole in the front of his hat, gave way at the knees and toppled backward.

Red Kane, one hand over his burned ear, turned. There in the doorway of the ranch-house stood the nester's daughter. Her black eyes were blazing. Her lips were parted, showing clenched white teeth. In her hands she held a rifle. From the muzzle a curl of greasy gray smoke spiraled lazily upward.

The spectators did not move. Some looked at the prostrate Durkin with the blood trickling from beneath his hat. Some looked at the girl where she stood motionless, her smoking rifle slanting across her tense figure. The girl stared at the body of the man she had shot. Slowly she passed the tip of a pink tongue across and across her tight-drawn lips. She held the rifle level and clicked in a fresh cartridge.

The nester's daughter raised her head. Each man of the scattered crowd felt that her smoldering gaze was personally fixed upon him. They shifted their feet and wriggled uneasy bodies. Even Kansas Casey and Red Kane were not immune to the general feeling of unease.

"Does anybody else think there's any stolen money around here, and does anybody else think my father is a road-agent?" Her voice was quite clear, and it carried an edge like a razor.

No one made reply. Somehow it seemed that no reply was necessary. The silence was thick enough to cut. It endured while one so moved might saddle a horse. Then Kansas Casey cleared a self-conscious throat. Kansas was not clear in his mind whether the case was one of murder or justifiable homicide. Justice in that country was a broad-minded lady, but Kansas Casey was a conscientious officer. God knows he always tried to do the proper thing.

"Ma'am," said Kansas Casey, taking off his hat to the girl, "I wish you'd gimme yore word not to leave the county till the sheriff—he's coroner—sits on this case. He'd oughta get back from Marysville inside a week—which I shore hope he does, if not sooner, 'cause I dunno how Durkin's gonna keep this weather. You see, ma'am," he continued persuasively, "me bein' here when you—when it happened, we gotta be legal about it so's it'll look right. But I don't guess they'll be no trouble. The jury'll be square about it. They always are. Most likely they'll bring it in suicide or the like o' that. So'f you'll just gimme yore word, ma'am, like I say——"

The supposed corpse chose this moment to move a leg and utter a lusty groan. Later it was told abroad that the gentleman named Riley, who was standing at Durkin's head, jumped six feet. But then everybody was more or less startled. Kansas Casey was so surprized that he bit his tongue. It was the resourceful Red who first recovered himself.

"I knowed he wasn't dead all along," declared that superior person. "Dead gents always fall on their faces—always; it's a rule. An' Durkin fell flat on his back, an' nobody noticed it 'cept me, which is nothin' to wonder at—considerin'."

In this wise and with these words Red Kane covered his bounding feeling of relief—relief that his goddess had not killed a man. He approved and admired her fighting spirit; yet, when it came to a public killing, he preferred to take it upon his own soul. For Red's life in the cow country had been unable to completely uproot the home-grown doctrine that woman's sphere is the hearth and fireside.

No one paid any attention to Red or what he was saying. Mr. Durkin was the center of attraction. His friend, Mr. Lenn, a dark-faced devil in a red-and-white checked shirt, eased Mr. Durkin's head up on his knee and took off Mr. Durkin's hat.

"Ow! Wow!" Mr. Durkin's yelp would not have disgraced a tortured coyote. "That's my head!" continued Mr. Durkin passionately. "Tryin' to scalp me, yuh thumb-handed idjit! My skull's fractured. I know —— well it is!"

"No such luck," Red Kane told him, dropping on one knee at his side. "You was lookin' for trouble, an' you got it. Yuh always did talk too much. This'll learn yuh to keep yore fool mouth shut. Hold still, can'tcha? How'n —— can I see how much yo're hurt with you wigglin' all over

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like a worm on a hook. There now, 'Rum,' yo're in luck. Told yuh yuh wasn't damaged none to speak of. The lead only tore all the skin and hair off the top o' yore head. The bone's only grooved a li'l' bit.

"Here, shove across with the water, 'Pickles.' Don't pour it in his eye! Over his head! That's it. Why couldn't yuh done it in the first place 'stead o' wastin' near all of it? Git me some more, will yuh? Hold still, Durkin. Too bad yuh can't see how fine I'm a-doin' this. You'd appreciate it. Look at it, gents. A reg'lar sawbones couldn't 'a' done no better. This'll be as good a job as Kansas done on Coxy's arm. Kansas, you bust open a cartridge an' gimme the powder. I wanna rub it on to stop the bleedin'."

"Don'tcha put no powder on my head!" commanded Durkin, striving to writhe out from beneath the ministering hands of Red Kane. "The blue'll never come out. I don't wanna look like a war-whoop in paint."

"Shut up! Got the powder, Kansas? Don't you go frettin' now, Rum; this here powder may hurt, but it'll shore stop the bleedin' an' keep out lockjaw. You don't wanna get lockjaw, do yuh? You wouldn't never talk nor eat nor nothin'. Think o' that, Rum, an' be happy. Any gent got a clean handkerchief?"

Red finally had the wounded man bandaged to suit him—Red—if not the patient, and rose to his feet.

"There," he said, slapping his palms together as he had seen a surgeon do on a certain occasion in Piegan City, "that's done. An', Rum, yuh won't never have to brush yore hair again. Yuh'll always have a part right in the middle. Save yuh a lot of trouble, that will."

The information did not wonderfully cheer Mr. Durkin. He lay on the broad of his back and regarded Red Kane darkly.

"Yeah," he grated, "I'm shore obliged to yuh, Red."

"I'll bet he's obliged most to death," Riley whispered into Carlson's appreciative ear. "He'll be Red's friend for life, Durkin will."

"Yeah," nodded Carlson, "an' he won't never forget Red's talkin' up to him thataway. Durkin can't stand nobody tellin' him the truth about himself. Hurts his feelin's. He's got right tender feelin's," he added with a short chuckle.

"If he's got any sense, Rum won't pamper them feelin's too much; not if he wants to keep on minglin' in our midst. I notice he sort o' let slide Red's callin' him a liar."

"He'll wait. Rum Durkin's got the patience of a cougar. If he can't get what he wants one way, he'll figure out another way."

"I know he ain't to be trusted," Riley admitted thoughtfully. "Too bad Red didn't have time to down him."

"Red will yet," asserted Carlson confidently. "He's all right, even if he did make me stick my hands up. Y' can't help but like the —— fool."

"Y' ain't the only one likes him," grinned Riley. "Look yonder."

Carlson looked. The men from Farewell were catching up their horses. Durkin, very wobbly in the saddle, his three friends in close attendance, was already starting off on the back trail. The space about the ranch-house was deserted save for Red Kane. The puncher, his back toward the house, was tightening cinches twenty feet from the kitchen door. The nester's daughter was looking at him through the kitchen window.

Red turned, and the girl dodged out of sight. He took a step toward the house, hesitated; then he suddenly wheeled back to his horse, slapped the reins up across its neck and mounted. He rode away by himself without a backward glance.

"Her lookin' thataway don't mean nothin'," whispered the sophisticated Carlson, who read more romantic novels than any twelve men in the Territory. "You can't tell what a woman means by her looks, nohow, but you can gamble she shore don't mean what yuh think she means no matter what. If yuh know what I mean."

"I don't," said Riley promptly. "Not for a minute. But alla same I wish she'd look at me thataway once. Just once. That's all I'd ask. I ain't talked to a real pretty girl in two year an' a half. I guess now I'll go ask her for a drink."

Riley set his hat straight and marched up to the kitchen door and knocked. Carlson, with a most peculiar smile, settled his shoulders against the corral stockade and waited.

The door opened, and the girl appeared. Riley took off his hat, achieved a head-bob in lieu of a bow and said something. The girl said something and closed the door.

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Riley pulled on his hat and strode directly to where his horse was tied. Riley's face was very red. Carlson's peculiar smile deepened.

"Whatsa matter, 'Irish'?" he asked when he had joined his friend. "Ain'tcha thirsty no more?"

"No, I ain't," Riley averred with biting emphasis. "She ain't so awful good-lookin' when yuh stand close to her," he continued with elaborate calm of manner. "Skin's kind o' coarse-like, an' her eyes is just a li'l' bit crossed."

"Yeah," said Carlson, "I guess likely. I dunno—my ears ain't so awful sharp—but I thought I heard her tell yuh they was a dipper at the spring an' to leave her alone. O' course, I'm only sayin' I thought she said that. I didn't mean to listen, Irish."

"No, you wouldn't, an' it don't matter anyway, an' it don't matter what she said neither. I don't think she's pretty a-tall, an' yuh can stick a pin in that, old-timer. Get your bone-rack an' come along before we get wet. Look at them clouds. Gonna rain, I guess. It *is* rainin', an' I left my slicker behind."

CHAPTER VIII

THE BROKEN KNIFE

"MY ——, PINEY," exclaimed Red Kane, stopping his horse beside the blacksmith shop, "ain'tcha never gonna get that wheel made? I ain't aimin' to spend the rest o' my sweet young life in this village o' bushwhackers, I ain't. Here you are pitchin' hossshoes like you hadn't a care in the wicked world, an' not one single spoke finished, I'll bet."

"Yo're a heap wrong, Red," declared the blacksmith, scratching his head with blackened fingers. "I got all o' six spokes ready, but I done dropped my spoke-shave an' nicked it, an'——"

"An', instead o' grabbin' the grindstone an' grindin' out the nick, yuh had to start in pitchin' hossshoes with that mis'able scoundrel, Bill Lainey. Howdy, Bill, don'tcha know pitchin' hoss-shoes is dangerous business for a gent o' yore size? Yo're likable to strain somethin' besides yore suspenders. Why, Bill, I dunno when I seen you takin' so much exercise all at once. Whatsa matter, tryin' to lose yoreself flesh or somethin'?"

The remarks to Bill Lainey's address were delivered in a hearty roar that carried well across and beyond the street, even as Red Kane had intended.

"For Gawd's sake!" wheezed Lainey imploringly, flapping fat hands at Red, "don't yell so loud! My wife'll hear yuh! Shut up, Red, will yuh?"

Like a horizontal jack-in-the-box, a sharp-faced woman popped head and shoulders out of one of the side windows of the hotel diagonally across the street. The sharp-faced woman fixed sharper eyes on the fat hotel-keeper.

"You, Bill Lainey!" she cried in a voice that matched to perfection her face and eyes. "You, Bill Lainey! You lazy good-for-nothin' lummox! If you can stay awake long enough to play hoss-shoes with that drunken sot of a blacksmith, who ain't fit company for a Injun hound to associate with, much less a white man, yo're strong enough to fetch me water an' wood. You hear me, you fat scalawag! Slide over here instanter, or I'll shore search out the broom an' pat yore face with it!"

"There," sighed Bill Lainey, hitching up his trousers, "I knowed I'd have a mighty run o' bad luck if I come over here instead o' sleepin' in my chair like I'd oughta. I knowed it. You hadn't oughta talked so loud, Red. I'm a-comin', Lize, I'm a-comin'."

Bill Lainey waddled off across the street. Red Kane winked at Piney Jackson and slouched sidewise in the saddle.

"C'mon now, you drunken sot of a blacksmith," urged Red, "get to work. You've heard that lady tell yuh what yuh are; only she didn't say half enough. She dunno yuh like I do, y' old reeprobate."

"Gawamighty," murmured the blacksmith, "she shore can whirl her tongue like you can a rope. I wouldn't be married to her for a good deal, I wouldn't."

"Not while yore own wife's alive, anyhow. That wheel, Piney, huh? You recollect we was talkin' about a wheel—one o' them round things with a tire an' a felly an' a hub an' lots o' spokes. Folks use 'em on wagons an' buckboards quite a lot. Wheels thataway make 'em run easier seemin'ly. How about it, Piney?"

"Yo're as bad as Mis' Lainey. I'll git to work immediate just to keep yuh from talkin' me deaf. Yo're a ——ova outfit, you fellers. Yuh always want yore jobs done at

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once if not sooner. A feller don't get no chance to rest a-tall. All right, all right, I won't fool around another minute. Say, ain't that Old Salt ridin' in on the trail?"

"Shore is, an' maybe he won't have somethin' to say himself."

When Mr. Saltoun, Red Kane's employer and owner of the Bar S ranch, came opposite the blacksmith shop, the grindstone within was bravely spurring and the puncher was rolling a cigaret. Mr. Saltoun saw more than the puncher. His brows drew together. He swung his horse toward the cowboy.

"Howdy, Red," said Mr. Saltoun, reining in in front of the blacksmith shop. "We've been sort o' expectin' you back the last four days."

"I know it," Red returned placidly. "I've been wantin' to come back, but I had to wait for the buckboard."

"The buckboard! Whadda yuh mean?"

"The buckboard is bust. I gotta wait for Piney to fix her up. He's workin' on a wheel now, I guess. Yonder she lays—over by the freight wagon."

Mr. Saltoun regarded the battered vehicle while the veins in his forehead swelled alarmingly. The buckboard was the apple of one eye. The mule-team was the apple of the other.

"Are the mules hurt?" he asked with terrible calmness.

"Not a hair twisted the wrong way," was the cheering reply. "They're over in Lainey's corral eatin' their heads off."

"How'd it happen?"

"Stage busted a axle, went on the rampage an' raised partic'lar —— round here for a spell. Yore buckboard was part o' the raisin'."

"The stage busted up my buckboard?"

"I'm sayin' so."

"They'll ante up for it, by ——! I'll show the —— —— they can't smash my property all to —— an' not pay good an' plenty! Where's that Buck Saylor? I'll tell him a thing or two! Where'll I find Buck?"

"There he goes now," said Red, glancing past Mr. Saltoun. "Slid out behind the office some'ers. Guess he must 'a' seen yuh comin'."

Mr. Saltoun, breathing fire and brimstone, hurried away to head off Buck Saylor, and Red Kane leaned back against his cantle and laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. Poor Buck! Old Salt would surely hang his hide on the fence.

Red Kane picked up his reins and jogged after Old Salt. The latter had caught Buck Saylor at the corral gate.

"But it ain't my fault!" Buck was protesting when Red arrived. "How could I help the axle bustin'? I'm askin' yuh, how could I help it? You act like it was all my fault!"

"I'm gamblin' you was careless or somethin'—you an' yore company. Rotten old wore-out stages! Why don'tcha loosen up an' buy a new outfit or some dope once in a while so's yore axles'll have a chance? Yo're gonna pay for that buckboard, you an' yore company, I tell yuh those. You just write out my claim right now this minute for two hundred dollars, an'——"

"Two hundred dollars!" Buck Saylor flung outraged hands aloft. "Two hundred dollars! Why, that squeak on wheels o' yores wasn't worth three whoops an' a —— in counterfeit money! Besides, yo're havin' it repaired. Piney Jackson is fixin' it up all same new. I seen it down at his blacksmith shop. Two hundred dollars nothin'! I'm lookin' out for my company, I am, an' I won't let yuh put in no such claim as that."

"What?" bawled Mr. Saltoun, his predatory-profiled head shooting forward. "Do I hear you say you won't lemme do this an' that? You won't lemme! You poor coot, you'll do just what I tell yuh in this deal. Yo're lookin' out for yore company, huh? Who was it bought them cayuses from me for twenty wheels apiece an' then resold 'em to the company for stage hosses at forty dollars a throw? Who was it, huh? You think I don't know nothin' about that li'l' business. Well, I do, you bet, an' you can gamble yore company will know any time I get ready to tell 'em. An' you sit up there an' blat how yo're a-lookin' out for the company! You got a nerve like a hoss tellin' me what to do!"

Buck Saylor leaned back against the corral gate. His smile was a pitiable thing as he strove to appear jaunty and affable.

"Them hosses I sold the company was just a joke," he explained, "just a li'l' joke. You wouldn't go for to say nothin' about it; I know yuh wouldn't. You'n me've always been old friends, Saltoun."

"I dunno whether the company would see the point o' the joke as easy as you do, Buck. They was fifty hosses in that bunch, which

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made one thousand even for you. Djuh think the company'd appreciate a thousand dollars worth o' joke even from such a funny feller as you are? Yuh'd better make out that two hundred an' fifty dollar claim for me, hadn't yuh, Buck?"

"You said two hundred a while ago."

"I changed my mind. I'm liable to do that when folks keep me waitin'. Are you gonna write out that claim without wastin' any more time, or will I have to change my mind again?"

"The company won't never allow no such claim as that; I know they won't."

"I know they will, 'cause yo're gonna recommend over yore own signature in that claim that they settle for two hundred an' fifty. When they see how their own agent, Mr. Buck Saylor, feels about it, they'll believe him an' pay it. See how it is?"

"I see," Buck Saylor groaned in deep bitterness of spirit. "All right, come along."

ACCOMPANIED by Mr. Saltoun, Buck Saylor returned to the express office. Red Kane did not follow. He dismounted, stepped to where Mr. Saltoun's horse had stood and picked up an object that had been kicked free of the ground by the wheeling horse.

The object was a dusty two-bladed jackknife, not a Barlow but the more modern blade of Swedish manufacture. The larger blade was broken off two inches from the tang. Red tapped the knife on his heel to rid it of dust and raised it to his mouth to blow out what remained of the Territory's fertile soil. Now he perceived that which had not met his eye at first—a thin silver coin caught between the small blade and the side of the knife. With his fingers he endeavored to pluck out the coin. Vain endeavor. The coin would not pluck. It was wedged fast. He tried his good front teeth and narrowly missed cracking one.

"This here short bit is plumb stubborn," he muttered, pulling out and opening his own pocket-knife.

With the blade of this implement he contrived to lever the coin from its resting-place.

The little piece of silver money was a dime, the short bit of that hard-working couple well and favorably known to all and sundry as two-bits. The dime, pierced near the edge by a small hole, pocket-piece fashion, bore a date eleven years old on the reverse. On the obverse the initials B. L., in deep, rough scratches, sprawled across the figure of the seated Liberty.

"B. L." murmured Red Kane, and with the ball of his thumb he rubbed clear the little nickel shield fastened on one side of the stained handle.

There were letters upon the shield, too. They had been scratched in even more deeply than in the coin. They were the same letters, B. L.

"I wonder if Lorimer's front name is Bill," mused Red Kane.

He dropped knife and dime into a vest-pocket and stooped to rake the earth with his fingers at the spot where he had found the knife. He was hunting for the missing portion of the larger knife blade.

"That break was new," he reflected. "I'd like to know what the owner o' the knife was tryin' to cut."

He did not find the broken blade, and he stood up and looked about him with keen, half-closed eyes.

"Right there is where they loaded the safe aboard the wagon," he told himself. "An' yonder's the express office door. A feller scamperin' round between them two places could easy lose the knife where I found her."

"Oh, Red, c'm 'ere a shake, will yuh?"

It was Mr. Saltoun who was calling to him from the express office. Red slouched to the side doorway and entered.

"Yeah?" he said inquiringly.

"I just want yuh to tell Buck what was in the hind end of the buckboard," explained Mr. Saltoun. "They must be somethin' else we can charge the company for."

"Only a few airtights," said Red. "They wasn't hurt none. Dented, that's all. I hadn't loaded up yet."

"You'd oughta," was Mr. Saltoun's reproof. "But I suppose I gotta be satisfied."

"Yuh shore gotta," Buck exclaimed in sarcasm. "My ——, Salt, I dunno what yo're raisin' cows for. Yo're wastin' yore life."

"Think so?" Mr. Saltoun asked dryly. "I might be sellin' hosses to the company, mightn't I? Never thought o' that."

Buck made no comment but chewed the end of his pen with a wry face. Mr. Saltoun pulled at his mustache and rubbed a stubbly chin.

"I guess we'll let it go at that," he sighed. "Lessee her, Buck."

Buck handed him the paper, and Mr.

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Saltoun read it through carefully not once but three times. Scotch blood did not flow in his veins for nothing.

"This'll do fine," said Mr. Saltoun. "Give's yore pen. Red, I wish you'd sign this, too. It'll make it stronger. Now, you, Buck, an' slam on yore notary public seal—sling on all the dog they is."

Dog! Red looked up quickly. What had become of Buck Saylor's dogs?

"Djever find yore dogs, Buck?" he asked.

"Never did. Dunno where they are. They never did come home after that night. Aw, I guess they was poisoned all right. They'd 'a' come home if they was alive."

Mr. Saltoun carefully blotted the signed and sealed report and slid it into one of Buck Saylor's official envelopes.

"I'll mail this myself," he announced, tapping his front teeth with the corner of the envelope and winking at Buck.

"You don't trust me," said the latter reproachfully.

"Shore I do," declared Mr. Saltoun. "Trust you a mile. Shore. Why not? It's only yore memory I got doubts of. You know yoreself, Buck, yo're awful forgetful; so yuh needn't get riled nohow. C' mon over to the Starlight, you an' Red, an' have a li'l' smile."

"In a minute," said Buck, brightening visibly at the invitation. "Soon's I write out my daily report, I'm with yuh."

Mr. Saltoun and Red went outside to wait. There was a bench flanking the side door. They seated themselves upon the bench. Mr. Saltoun sat at the end nearest the door. Mr. Saltoun, slumping down limply, leaned his left shoulder against the door jamb. He felt a sharp jab through the flannel of his shirt. He turned, rubbing his shoulder, and found a piece of steel sticking in the wood of the jamb.

"Fool trick leavin' knife blades where they can stick into people," said he and tried to pull it out with his fingers.

But the knife had been driven in deeply. Not more than a half inch of it protruded.

"Maybe it ain't a knife blade," hazarded Red casually.

"Shore it is. It's got the li'l' notch in it for yore finger-nail so's yuh can open it easy. Think I don't know a knife blade when I see it? Say, Buck, why don'tcha pick the knife blades out o' yore door jambs?"

"Knife blade? What knife blade?" Buck, inky pen in inkier fingers, came to the door.

"There," said Mr. Saltoun, pointing.

Instantly Buck Saylor became active. He dropped his pen, rummaged through the cluttered contents of a tool-box beneath the office table and returned with a pair of pliers.

Red watched with calculating interest as the express agent pulled out the knife blade.

"I remember now," said Buck Saylor, "hearin' one o' them thieves cussin' how he'd busted his knife. This must be the blade. It's a clue."

"Har! Har!" Red's laugh was deeply contemptuous. "All you gotta do is find the gent who owns the rest o' the knife."

"Well," returned the agent, "it'll help a bit, maybe. You never can tell."

"Yuh never can," grinned Red. "Lessee that blade."

Red took the blade to a front window as if to give it the benefit of more light. Buck returned to his report. Red, his back to the agent, fished from his pocket the knife he had found. Without attracting the slightest attention from the absorbed agent, he managed to open the knife and piece together the two parts of the broken blade. They fitted exactly.

Red's eyebrows straightened in a frown; then he smiled briefly and unobtrusively returned the jack-knife to his pocket. He remained at the window, looking into the street and juggling the broken blade in the palm of his hand.

"She's a queer world," he said aloud at the end of three minutes' silent contemplation of life on Main Street.

"Huh?" Buck Saylor abstractedly looked up from his work.

"Nothin'. I was just talkin'. Here's yore' knife blade, Buck."

The bit of steel tinkled down on the table, and Red Kane went outside and joined his employer on the bench.

CHAPTER IX

LANPHER

"I WANT the 88's money!" Lanpher stated in no uncertain tones.

"Yuh'll have to take it out in wantin' then," Buck Saylor yawned indifferently, only too happy to show the world without

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that he was not to be bluffed by the 88 manager.

He even winked brazenly at Mr. Saltoun, who, with Red Kane and as many of the world without as could crowd in, fairly filled the express office.

"The company'll have to pay," cried Lanpher, who had observed the wink, "an' don't you forget it."

"They will not," was the prompt retort. "The ten thousand wasn't insured."

"What?" Lanpher screeched.

"I said yore money wasn't insured." Buck leaned back in his chair, thumbs hooked in the armholes of his vest, enjoying to the full the effect of his statement on Lanpher.

"Not insured!" Lanpher's skin went green beneath the tan.

"Cheer up, Lanpher," urged the marshal. "Whadda you care? You won't lose nothin'. You hadn't given no receipt for the money, had yuh? Well, then, the party sendin' yuh the coin will have to stand the loss."

"An' that's my company—the folks that own the ranch. They was sendin' me the money to buy cows with. An' now it's gone. Somethin's gotta be done. Buck, even if that money wasn't insured, what right you gotta sit round like a bump on a log with my money flittin' Gawd knows where? 'Sno use tellin' me yo're sorry. What t' —— I care whether yo're sorry or not. It don't get my money back. Yo're a fine express agent, lettin' them bandits prance down on yuh an' tie yuh all up. Why don'tcha do somethin', huh? Tell me that. Why don'tcha do somethin'?"

"Why don't I do somethin'!" bawled Buck, red-faced and temperish. "Why don't I do somethin'. Which I did do somethin'. Which we all did somethin'. We ——"

And Buck went on to tell of what had been done in quest of the stolen money.

Lanpher, gnawing his thin, protruding upper lip, listened in silence. When Buck ceased speaking, the rat-like countenance of the 88 manager was mottled with an ugly wrath.

"That —— nester!" he burst out, sliding round in his chair to face the roomful. "He come through my ranch, an' I warned him to keep away from this country. I told him he'd be sorry for his health if he fooled round these parts. An' he's throwed down by Sweetwater, has he? An' allows he's gonna ranch it, does he? Ranch it ——! We don't want no such ranchers round here. What happens soon's he comes, huh? What happens, gents? The express office is robbed; the safe an' express box full o' money is packed off—fifty thousand dollars, gents—an' the stage is held up. Don't tell me this nester had nothin' to do with it. I seen him, an' he looks like a criminal. An' he wears two guns. What's he want two guns for if he's straight? I tell yuh he knows somethin' about what's goin' on, an' yuh can stick a pin in that."

"Y' betcha!" said the worthy Mr. Lenn, Mr. Durkin's boon comrade. "I knowed from the start that nester was a bad actor."

"Shore!" corroborated Mr. Dill, known as Pickles among his associates. "I wanted to hang him," he added virtuously.

"Who in —— gave you license to stretch people?" rapped out Red Kane, unable to contain himself longer. "Anybody'd think you was the sheriff. You an' a lot o' gents like you are just too handy with a rope till it comes to workin' with it for forty a month, an' then you get a lame arm or a misery in yore stummick."

"Nemmine about who gimme license," was the limping return of Pickles Dill. "I wanna see justice done, an' I ain't the only one wants to see it, neither."

"Yeah," sneered Red. "They's quite a bunch o' you fellers, but so far yore mixin' in to shove justice along hasn't helped yuh a whole lot! Take Durkin now. How's his head? An' Cox. Can he use his arm comfortable yet? You can easy see how it is, Pickles. A gent wants to be mighty careful how he slams round helpin' out justice. Whadda you guess?"

Red Kane looked hard at Pickles Dill. The men surrounding the latter felt an immediate distaste for his intimate vicinity and moved elsewhere. Pickles was not a coward—that is, with most men he was brave enough. But he was not brave enough to join issue with Red Kane. Taking a chance was one thing. But going after his gun against Red Kane would not be even taking a chance. It would be plain, unadorned suicide—that species of self-destruction which leads the friends of the deceased to remark, "The poor fool. Didn't he know no better?"

Pickles Dill refused the fence with all the dignity he could squeeze up.

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"We all got our opinions o' what's what," said Pickles Dill.

"Which is one right sensible answer," was Red Kane's endorsement.

"But it don't get nowhere," put in Lanpher, who should have known better.

"Oh, yes," said Red Kane softly, his red hair bristling under his hat. "Oh, yes. It don't get nowhere. Is they any particular place you was wantin' it to go?"

"Are you tryin' to shield this here nester?" Thus the 88 manager evaded one question by asking another.

"Shield him from what? What's he done that I gotta shield him from? Tell me what he's done?"

"If this Lorimer is one o' the road-agents—an' I'm free to admit his driftin' in right before the robberies is mighty suspicious, an' I'll leave it to the rest o' you gents if it ain't—if he is one of 'em like I think an' say, then he'd oughta be stretched, an', if he ain't one of 'em, he's a nester an' out to get rich at our expense like all the rest of 'em. Why, gents, the nesters in this country is gettin' worse than the itch. What they don't steal, they spoil. They're worse'n sheep. We cattlemen gotta stick together, an'——"

"You bet we have," shouted "Spunk" Lenn. "The nesters must go."

"Since when have you been a cattleman, Spunk?" Red Kane desired to know. "Last I heard, an' that was yesterday, you was tendin' bar at the dance-hall. We cattlemen, huh? Yo're funny."

Spunk Lenn subsided like a pricked balloon. Lanpher glared at Red Kane. The latter stared back.

"You wasn't finished when Spunk stuck his horn in," suggested Red. "Le's hear the rest."

"I was just gonna say that a whole lot o' jiggers have been lynched good an' plenty on less suspicion than they is against this nester. Somebody's gotta be lynched for what's happened."

"Gotta?" chipped in Mr. Saltoun, who detested Lanpher and all his works. "Why gotta?"

"I meant oughta," replied Lanpher with a facial contortion that made him more than ever resemble a rat. "You know yoreself nesters ain't got no business in this country."

"Them Dale folks down there at Mocassin Spring is fine neighbors," continued Mr. Saltoun with a Wintry smile. "They was nesters, an' 'Chuck' Morgan married the girl."

LANPHER glowered and gnawed his upper lip. He recalled quite well that Chuck Morgan had married the daughter of the nester, Dale. Nor had he forgotten the beating he had suffered at the hands of the Bar S puncher, the Kid's Twin. Still vivid in his memory glistened the bright fact of Mr. Saltoun's having, on that memorable occasion, thrown down on him with a six-shooter. Never, while he lived, would Mr. Lanpher be able to forget these occurrences. But he habitually forced himself—and the forcing was not arduous either—to ignore the little difficulties of the past. Lanpher, the artful logician, reasoned that his prime duty was toward his employers. Who was he to allow his personal differences to interfere with their interests, especially when the said differences were with such a reckless, straight-shooting outfit as the Bar S boys?

So Lanpher ceased to glower and gnaw and achieved a fair imitation of a smile. This deceived neither Red nor Mr. Saltoun. They knew the man inside and out.

"We gotta do somethin'," persisted Lanpher. "You can see that, gents."

"What, for instance?" Red Kane shot the question at him like a bullet.

"Well, now—" hesitated Lanpher.

"Short o' goin' out an' stretchin' a innocent man, you got nothin' to suggest, Lanpher, an' you know it." Red leveled a lean left forefinger at the 88 manager. "I dunno what yore li'l' game is, but I don't like it. You hear me. I don't like it."

"Whadda yuh mean?" Lanpher half rose from his chair.

Chill fear twanged his heart-strings. He did not want to fight, and Red was manifestly striving to provoke him. Pride spurred on the wretched *Bobadil* and clawed at the tags of his frayed courage. Red's smile was as chilly as Lanpher's fear.

"If you don't know what I mean, guess?"

"Le's not do no guessin'," suggested the voice of Kansas Casey, who had entered unperceived by Lanpher and his audience. "Whatsa use? We're all li'l' friends together, ain't we? Shore we are. Besides, if any gent does start gettin' smoky, I'll do what I can to stop him."

Kansas, talking all the time, pushed his

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way through the crowd and halted beside Red Kane. He rested his hands on his hips and looked down at Buck Saylor where he sat slouched in his chair behind the table.

"I found yore dogs, Buck," he announced.

"Where was they?" queried the agent, frowning. "Fine kind o' watch-dogs, they was," he added, heavily contemptuous.

"Yuh needn't bother about 'em no more," Kansas told him. "They was both dead."

"Dead!" Buck Saylor cried, leaping out of his chair with such force that it fell over with a crash. "Dead! My dogs dead! Yo're—yo're shore they was my dogs," he added, doubt and hope combined wrinkling his not overclean features.

"I'd know yore dogs anywhere," Kansas Casey declared with finality. "I knowed 'em soon's I see 'em spread out under a cedar in that timber south o' Squaw Draw. They was a rope through their collars, an' they'd been tied to the cedar. They was shot with .45s, by the size of the holes. I couldn't find the bullets. She's kind o' hot weather now, an' anythin' dead don't keep very well, but I judged they'd cashed in maybe four days ago."

Buck Saylor did not seem to hear what the deputy was saying. He leaned forward and rested closed fists on the table top.

"I liked them dogs," he ground out, gazing straight before him. "I raised them from pups, I did, an' I taught 'em to roll over an' play dead an' beg an' bark when they wanted out or in. They was gentle as kittens with me, an' I wouldn't 'a' had nothin' happen to 'em for a whole lot. My dogs! By ——! I— Where didja say they was, Kansas? Timber south o' Squaw Draw, huh? Gents, yuh'll have to adjourn some'ers else. I gotta go bury them dogs."

From the express office the component parts of the crowd drifted in various directions. In the main they gravitated to the various saloons.

Lanpher stood alone on the sidewalk and watched Kansas Casey shepherding Red Kane and Mr. Saltoun into the Happy Heart. Nobody had asked Lanpher to drink. Nobody, unless ax-grinding was in view, ever did ask him. He was far from being a congenial spirit. He was aware of this and was more pleased thereby than otherwise. Drinking in company carried no appeal. He greatly preferred taking his bottle to bed with him and tippling in solitude.

He went down to the Starlight and bought two quart bottles—one of corn whisky, the other of rye. These he carrried to his horse and packed tenderly in the saddle-bags.

He mounted and started homeward, his brain busy with his wrongs. The money consigned to him was gone, and gone for good and all, apparently; because the money was gone, the cattle deal he had arranged must fall through, and he would lose the bonus promised him by his company. One thousand dollars! No wonder Lanpher squirmed as if the saddle-leather burned him. And his old enemy, the Bar S, through Red Kane, had flouted him again.

The Bar S outfit was always picking on him, meddling in his affairs and trying to make trouble regardless. Why should Red Kane and Mr. Saltoun champion the nester, Lorimer? What business was it of theirs, he'd like to know. Nesters had no right to live, the rustlers. Lynching was too good for them, and in particular was it too good for Lorimer, this man who had defied him to his face before his own ranch-house door and swore he'd take up a homestead wherever he wished. Now it would seem that Lorimer had kept his word.

It was true that Sweetwater Mountain lay not on the 88 range but on that belonging to the Cross-in-a-box. Yet this did not in the least ameliorate Lorimer's offense. Lorimer should have moved on, gone out of the country when ordered so to do. This he had certainly not done. It was too much. It was not to be borne by a ranch manager with a mark to make in the world.

Morever, the nester probably knew a good deal about the robberies. His arrival and their occurrence could not be fortuitous. No doubt he was the leader of the gang. He had looked capable of almost any villainy. Kansas Casey and that idiotic posse! Lanpher didn't believe they'd half searched the nester's ranch or properly questioned him either. He wished he'd been there, so he did. He wouldn't have bungled everything.

TO BE CONTINUED

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RIVER LAW

by W. E. BRANDON

THE big eight-ton *batalao* slowed, stopped, and then drifted idly toward the shore as the tall bronzed white man signaled the the pilot and the twenty native paddlers backed water with their paddles. The white man leaned against the palm-leaf *camarote* in the after part of the huge rubber-carrying canoe and squinted at the squatting figure on the shore.

The figure, a dirty, nearly nude Caripuna Indian, squatted on his heels and watched the big canoe swing nearly to the shore. On each side of the squatting figure was piled an equal number of cans of condensed milk, and before him lay the remains of a wooden box. He peered at the white man and then pointed to the two equal piles. The white man nodded, shrugging his shoulders. The Indian gathered up one pile of the canned viscid fluid, gave a backward glance at the big canoe and trotted off into the jungle.

"Senhor Hawkes, the case must have been lost from the canoe but lately," stated the native pilot as one of the natives tossed the remaining cans back into the *batalao*.

"No matter, Joao," replied Jim Hawkes, ex-cowboy, soldier of fortune and now a rubber trader in the jungles of the Rio Madeira.

"This so-called river law makes it easy to steal legitimately. So long as salvage entitles one to half, there will always be salvage."

"No matter, Joao; cast off!"

The *batalao* swung from the shore under the strokes of twenty paddles and continued its way down-river with its precious load of eight tons of crude rubber—all the worldly wealth of Jim Hawkes.

But Jim Hawkes was not thinking of rubber just then. While his eyes seemed to sweep the river and the jungle-clad banks, they were really looking into the dark eyes of Senhorita Josefina Miguelao, and his ears seemed to hear her say:

"Oh! Jim, you know that I would change all this if I could. If father—but, Jimmie, I had to promise him. I tried—so hard, Jimmie."

Jim Hawkes kicked savagely at a biscuit of rubber at his feet, and his Braziliero pilot looked up questioningly at him. But Hawkes' bronzed face told him nothing.

"The river law is very old, *senhor*," he ventured, "very old," thinking perhaps that the big white man was thinking of the case of milk, which was desired above all things by the Caripunas.

Hawkes nodded and straightened as he peered ahead. Below them and piled along the bank were a pile of trade goods and several piles of raw rubber. This marked the camp of other rubber-gatherers, ready for this portage around the rapids known

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as "O Calderao do Infierno"—the Cauldron of Hell.

Hawkes signaled his pilot to put in to the shore.

"*Alha na playa encima, senhor?*" inquired Joao.

"Yes," replied Hawkes, "I desire that we should camp alone and not with Miguelao, who has, I see, camped at the usual grounds at the head of the rapids."

At a word from the pilot the paddlers swung the heavy load to the shore.

"It is late, *senhor*," urged the pilot. "Can not we delay the unloading until dawn?"

"Yes, yes," impatiently. "Make camp."

Suddenly his face lighted. His eyes had caught sight of a gay colored mantilla in the semi-gloom of one of the *champas*.

Joao noted the look on his master's face and smiled. He, also, had seen the mantilla, and he knew something of his master's desires. To Joao, Hawkes was almost a god. He swore by the big bronzed white man, and down in his heart smoldered a hatred of Miguelao, who stood between his master and happiness.

Joao saw that the men had made camp. He walked over to where Hawkes stood, rolling a cigaret.

"Senhor Miguelao is taking his family down-river, it seems," he ventured, "and it is so short time since the beautiful Senhorita Josefina came up-river, returning from the schools of Europe. I wonder is it that she does not remain in the rubber country, *senhor?*"

"Go swing my hammock," ordered Hawkes harshly. Then, more kindly, "What do I know about that pirate's business, Joao?"

"True, *senhor*, he is of the devil's breed."

As the pilot turned to do his bidding, a figure clad in white trousers and a pajama coat appeared in front of the shack at the rapids' head and waved a brown hand in an overhanging sweep, which, with Latins, is always a beaconing signal. Joao saw the signal and turned inquiringly to Hawkes, but the latter merely scowled and turned back to his fire, where the men were preparing the evening meal of *charqui, farinha* and tea. He stood looking morosely into the embers for several minutes and only started from his revery when a silky voice behind him called:

"Aha, Don Jeemie! And why ees it that I mus' come to you? Ees it not ze reevair law that ze las' to reach ze portage mus' first veesit ze one already 'zere? For why ees it zat you hol' ze bad feel toward me, Senhor Hawkes?"

THE newcomer was an undersized individual with a well-rounded paunch, a pair of ferret eyes, a belligerent little mustache and a self-satisfied oiliness.

"Custom, yes," replied Hawkes, looking down at Miguelao. "Law? Perhaps. Also perhaps in this case I wish to break that law. Well? You swore that I was to speak no more to your daughter, and she was ordered to not even think of me.

"Listen, you —— pirate!" Hawkes shoved his hands deep in his pockets as if he could not trust himself to keep his fingers off that oily throat. "You've domineered your family until they don't dare to call their souls their own. You have frightened your daughter until in spite of her European education she is willing to sacrifice herself to your bidding. She loves me—yes, she does! And God knows I love her. River law, ——!"

Miguelao shrugged his shoulders.

"Now, Don Jeemie, you weel feel different as ze time passes. You ask ze eempossible. As one trader I have ze great respec' for you. You shoot straight, and ze natif like you. Mabe you be reech one day, eh? But as ze—what you call heem—son-in-law? No, no!

"You are jus' starting in ze business, and my daughter mus' not marry wit' one who is jus' starting, *senhor*. She goes weeth her mother and me now to San Antonio for ze celebration of ze *boda*—what you call ze engagement. She ees now look weeth great favor on ze suit of my *compadre*, Senhor Juarez."

"That nigger!" cried Hawkes. "You'd sacrifice your daughter to that nigger!"

"Neegur?" exclaimed Miguelao, "Juarez ees not neegur. He ees of Portuguese blood. He has on zis reevair more *batalaos* than you have ze biscuits of rubber. He ees ver' reech man. Zen it weel be Miguelao an' Juarez—greates' rubber dealers on ze reevair, eh?"

Hawkes' face hardened, and the Brazilian tried to step back hurriedly. But the big white man had grasped him by the shoulder like a vise.

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"Listen, you greasy pup!" snapped the big fellow, shaking the Brazilian violently. "You'd sacrifice your daughter for a few dirty dollars? It's true that all I own in the world is that eight tons of rubber in that *batalao* up there—a first-class up-river *borracha*—and I've got a good concession. But I wouldn't sacrifice a mongrel pup for money. You have no pride of race, color or family. You'd do anything for money. All you want is to be the greatest rubber baron in the Matto Grosso. The wish of a hog!"

The Brazilian's face hardened. Pride and ambition were his besetting sins, but this taunt of Hawkes' had stung deeply. Already rich, he wanted more, and he knew that as a father-in-law to the already rich Juarez he could control the output of the river. Hitherto his objection to Hawkes was based solely on finances, but now—his white teeth flashed in a snarl as he retorted:

"But eet ees the desire of Josefina and her mother. Juarez is prepare a great *fiesta* for the *boda*, which will cost heem more than your entire cargo of rubber is worth. But he can afford. He has arrange' to spend more on ze *fiesta* than I can afford to geeve my daughter as her dot. But," the Brazilian snapped his fingers, "zat is nossing. He ees reech."

Hawkes turned away, staring down the river.

"Miguelao, you know you lie when you say that it is Josefina's desire," he stated slowly. "You lie, and you know you lie. But no matter. I won't consider myself out of the running until there is no chance left. That eight tons of rubber will give me a start—and I'm white."

Miguelao turned without speaking and walked back along the river path. Hawkes walked over and examined the moorings of his precious *batalao*. Then he went back to his own fire.

A little later on, as he sat smoking and looking moodily into the flames, Joao slipped into the firelight and sat down.

"The *senhorita* and her mother sleep tonight in the empty *batalao*," he offered, after a period of silence. "They fear the fer-de-lance. One was seen in their camp this evening, *senhor*."

Hawkes stretched his arms and threw his cigaret into the fire, but he did not reply.

"The bite of the fer-de-lance is sure—they say," volunteered Joao. "Perhaps the snake will find Senhor Miguelao."

"It would kill the snake, Joao," said Hawkes sleepily and wandered over to his hammock.

Joao sat by the dying fire for a while before he got up, yawned and nodded to himself—

"Of a truth it would kill the snake."

"JOAO," came a sibilant whisper from the gloom, and the pilot whirled. "Where is the Senhor Hawkes?"

"Pardon, *senhorita*, I—I will call him," stammered Joao. "Stand thou still, and I will send him to you."

A moment later Jim Hawkes circled the light of the small fire and clasped the outstretched hands of Josefina.

"Josie, what are you doing here?" he whispered hoarsely.

"Oh, Jimmie, I had to come." She glanced nervously behind her. "He told mother and I that—that you had agreed that it was better for me to marry Juarez. You didn't say that, did you, Jimmie?"

"Say it?" choked Hawkes. "Say that, girl? My God, no!"

"That's nice," she whispered, cuddling up under his big arm. "But, Jimmie, I don't know what I am going to do. I have promised to marry Juarez, and I suppose I will have to—if I am there at the *boda*. You know that is as binding as the real marriage."

"If you're there?" parroted Hawkes. "What do you mean, sweetheart?"

"Well, maybe—I won't, Jimmie. When you sell your cargo of rubber, we might—but you have your concession to look after and all that——"

"You mean—" Hawkes took her face between his big palms and turned it to him—"You mean that you would run away with me, Josie? Honestly, Josie-girl?"

"Sh-h-h-h!" she whispered warningly, putting her tiny finger over his mouth.

"Let me go now, Jimmie. I—I won't marry Juarez—I can't marry him if I'm not there at the *boda*."

And she melted away in the darkness.

Hawkes stood there like a statue until she was far down to her own camp. Then he took a deep breath:

"Good! That cargo will take us back

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to the States, and to —— with the concession and all the rubber on earth."

The early dawn was just breaking when Joao hurled himself into Hawkes' hammock and grabbed him by the shoulder.

"The *batalao, senhor!*" he cried. "Quick. Get up!"

"What about the *batalao*?" asked Hawkes, springing to his feet. "What happened, Joao?"

"Come, *senhor*," he replied, and the two men trotted in the dusk down to the edge of the river.

Hawkes swore deep in his throat as he stepped down and examined the severed end of the rope which had moored his cargo of rubber.

"Gone!" he whispered as if afraid to speak the word aloud. "Wonder if the Caripunas cut that rope, Joao?"

"Maybe—but I don't believe," answered Joao. "If it was trade goods—canned milk maybe, but rubber—no, *senhor*. Caripunas no steal rubber like that."

Suddenly the thought struck Hawkes that perhaps Miguelao knew more about it than he cared to tell, and he loosened the big Colt which always swung in a specially constructed holster over his right hip and inside the waistband of his trousers.

There was not a single doubt that somewhere down the Rio Madeira was his eight tons of rubber, scattered broadcast and practically impossible to recover.

"I'm sorry, *senhor*," said Joao sincerely. "Last night I hear what you say to *senhorita*. I know how you feel. Please don't be angry. I stay close because you forget that maybe somebody come and hear, and Joao's good watch-dog."

Hawkes put his big hand affectionately on the native's shoulder.

"Joao, I'm broke in more ways than one, and it seems mighty good to have some one for a friend. You stay here, boy. I'm going to take a little walk."

He strode down the river trail and into Miguelao's camp, but there was nobody in sight. He looked the place over, but there was no sign of life. So he traveled on down the trail around the Cauldron of Hell, and about half-way down he met Miguelao coming up. The Brazilian looked tired, and his white trousers were bedraggled, but at the sight of the white man he stopped and smiled.

"Sooch good luck for you, Senhor Hawkes," he greeted. "My brave men have salvage' all ze *borracha*. Two hunnerd and seexty *peles*."

"That's fine, old-timer," said Hawkes, genuinely grateful to Miguelao, "That's fine. Wonder how it ever got loose?"

"Caripunas, *senhor*, I theenk," smiled Miguelao. "They great thieves."

"Hm-m-m," suspicion returned to Hawkes' mind. "How did you happen to have your men posted this far down this early in the morning? Looks —— queer."

Miguelao showed his teeth in a smirking smile and shrugged his shoulders.

"I have tell my men to mak' ready some t'ings for ze ladies comfort when zey arrive zis morning. Zose Caripunas are devils, *senhor*."

"Caripunas ——!" snapped Hawkes. "No Injun ever cut that rope, Miguelao."

"So? You mak' ze accuse?" Miguelao was properly indignant. "Ees it not better zat you have half of your *borracha* through ze efforts of my brave men zan to have nossing?"

"Half?" blurted Hawkes. "I thought you said you had saved all of the two hundred and sixty *peles*."

"Ah, so we did, *senhor*," he replied with an evil grin. "But you mus' not forget ze reevair law: one half to ze man who make ze salvage. I have already mak' ze divide."

"So?" Hawkes' grin was murderous as he thrust out his jaw at the Brazilian. "What is the game, Miguelao? Going to break me so I won't bother you any more?"

"Eet is not a game, *senhor*," he replied, spreading his hands. "Eet ees business. That one pile of one hunnerd an' thirty *peles* I s'all geeve to Senhor Juarez as ze dot at ze time of ze *boda*. Eet ees ver' fortunate for poor Miguelao."

From a tangle of bushes up the trail sneaked the figure of Joao. He hurried back toward Miguelao's camp. Into his faithful but narrow mind floated schemes of revenge. He knew the river law, and he wondered what would hurt Miguelao worst.

Hawkes was speechless. He realized that Miguelao held all the trumps. By the unwritten law of the river half his rubber belonged to Miguelao. He could not gainsay the use of it as a dot, yet he was furious with rage.

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"Miguelao," his voice cut like a steel saw, "right now I spare you because you are Josie's father, but, after you leave this spot, I forget that, and I'll kill you like I would a snake. Do you get that, you Colorado Madura crook? After I kick all the oil out of your system, I'll throw you so far out into O Calderao do Infierno that nobody but the devil will ever salvage you. Now, git!"

Miguelao hurriedly called his men and started for the upper camp, turning only for a parting shot:

"I will ask that you watch my share of ze rubber, *senhor*. We weel be down soon."

THIS natives split as Hawkes' own men came down the trail—all but Joao—and they walked down to where two piles of rubber glistened on the bank of the river. Hawkes cast his eyes over the two piles of huge balls, but they were equal in number, showing that Miguelao had been honest in his dishonesty. He set his men overhauling the *batalao*, which had been damaged but little, and sat down, smoking gloomily.

The boat was soon repaired, and he set his men to work loading one of the piles of rubber. Although he cursed every time he passed the other pile, he held religiously to the river law and left it untouched. Part of the crew had been sent back for the camp equipment, which had been brought down and stowed in the canoe, and the party was ready to embark.

Hawkes had watched uninterestedly while the men loaded the boat. "Half a load, half enough," he mused. He picked up his rubber-coated war-bag, without which no trader ever travels the rivers. This bag, air-tight when tied, is usually partly filled with valuable papers, etc. and then filled with air. It is then tied at the neck, doubled over and retied to prevent the escape of the air, the bag thus serving as cushion, pillow or, in case of accident on the river, as a life-preserver.

Hawkes had just finished tying his war-bag and was about to toss it into his half-filled *batalao* when one of his men cried out excitedly and pointed up-stream.

At the head of the rapids far above him appeared a dark splotch which rode high out of water and then dipped into a deep whirl of the rapids. One of Miguelao's *batalaos* had broken adrift, thought Hawkes, and he mentally hoped it would smash like a cardboard in the whirl of the Devil's Cauldron.

Sharp cries from his men caused him to look closer, and, when the tossing *batalao* seemed to stand almost on its bow, he caught a glimpse of vivid color and white in the boat.

His blood froze at the sight, and from his soul came a prayer that the craft might make the rapids in safety. Somehow the *batalao*, in which the two women were sleeping, had become loosened, and the clumsy craft was dipping and whirling in the white water, swinging so high that the watchers below were able to see almost the entire bottom of the canoe. While Hawkes froze into inaction, the central current picked up the boat and rushed it forward at express speed. The screams of the two women who crouched in the bottom were drowned by the roar of the water.

"Stand by below with the longest line!" cried Hawkes, springing far out into the quiet water below the rapids, his war-bag clutched to him and partly under his left arm.

Several of the natives grasped the idea. One of them gathered up the long Manila rope used in lowering the canoe over the rapids and, followed by the rest of the crew, ran rapidly down the stream, where the shallows ran out toward the center of the river course.

Meanwhile Hawkes battled straight out toward the point near the center where the greatest volume of water poured in a smooth cascade between two huge pillars of boulders. From second to second he could see the canoe rushing downward, dipping, whirling, swaying from side to side in the grip of mighty waters. As he gained the central current, battling like a madman to maintain his position, the canoe topped the cascade—but broadside on.

"My God! They're gone!" he gasped, and a second later the *batalao* struck the boulder pillar and whirled over like a log.

But even as he stared at the glistening keel, a flash of white darted past him in the water. Like a flash he surged forward and grasped the skirts of Josefina.

Whirled round and round by the current, by desperate effort he managed to retain his grasp on the girl and the life-saving

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war-bag. As they whirled down-stream an arm clutched around his neck. The added weight caused him to continue his desperate battle under water.

It seemed an eternity before he could force his head above the water and fill his aching lungs with air. A glance showed him that his men had swung out in a human life-line, holding on to the heavy rope, and the next instant he felt the tug and whirl as they drifted into them. Then the entire line swung a few feet toward the bank and eddied into smooth water, where his feet touched ground.

It was the work of only an instant for him to scramble up the bank and lay his precious burden on the ground, white and limp but beautifully alive.

It was only then that Hawkes realized that the arm which had threatened to drown him and his burden belonged to Josefina's mother, who was now being helped to safety by the natives.

Hawkes dropped on his knees beside Josefina and picked up one of her limp hands. Rushing feet came down the river trail, and an explosion came from the lips of Miguelao:

"*Dios mio!*" he screamed, his face white in spite of his blood. "Oh! *Mi esposa!*"

He slumped down beside the group on the bank. His lips moved in silent prayer. Then he peered at Hawkes' white face.

"Senhor Hawkes, you do gr-r-reat service for Miguelao," he whimpered. "Nevair weel I forget eet. My *batalao* rope ees chafe in two, an' but for you I would be lose all zat is more zan my life."

Hawkes nodded and looked down at the face of Josefina.

"Yes, I reckon," said Hawkes, slowly. "Yes, I reckon so. You win, Miguelao."

"Senhor Hawkes—"

They both turned and looked at Joao, who stood there looking at Hawkes with a quizzical expression on his brown face:

"Senhor Hawkes, perhaps you forget the river law," he remarked, meaningly, and over Hawkes' face slowly came a look of understanding.

Miguelao frowned and looked to Hawkes for an explanation.

"It is true, Joao, I did forget." Then to the astonished Miguelao: "You have but lately reminded me of the unwritten law of the river, which gives half of the salvage. I have already made the division," pointing to the *senhora* and then to Josefina, who was now looking up at Hawkes with a look of wonderment.

"I take the daughter, Miguelao—you the wife. Is it fair division?"

Miguelao looked wildly at the two women, then back at Hawkes' smiling face.

"And also," continued Hawkes, pointing up at the pile of rubber biscuits. "Also I take the dot you intended for the betrothed of your daughter. Is that not river law?"

He motioned for his men to begin loading the rubber and then turned back to Miguelao, who stood looking down the river, a quizzical expression on his oily face. Miguelao drew a deep breath, walked over to the side of his wife, and, throwing one arm about her shoulder, he nodded:

"Eet ees fair divide, Senhor Hawkes." Then, as an afterthought, "And, after all, Juarez ees—w'at you call heem? Neegur!"

Hawkes nodded as he took both Josefina's hands in his. His eyes were staring straight at Joao, who stood there silently contemplating the heavy file in his hands. He rubbed the file along the palm of his hand, then tossed it into the river.

"Joao," muttered Hawkes. "You didn't——"

"Senhor Miguelao say the rope was chafed in two," replied Joao absently and shrugged his shoulders. "River law is the same as any law, *senhor*. Sometimes you have to take a big chance to win. Is it not so?"

"Joao," Hawkes reached out his right hand to his Brazilian pilot, "shake. But you sure made it a life or death chance for me. You sure thought quick."

Joao grinned.

"Quick, *senhor?* It was what you Americanos say 'Fight the devil with fire,' eh? Fire I do not have; so I use O Calderao do Infierno. River law is good law, eh?"

"No better, Joao," replied Hawkes.

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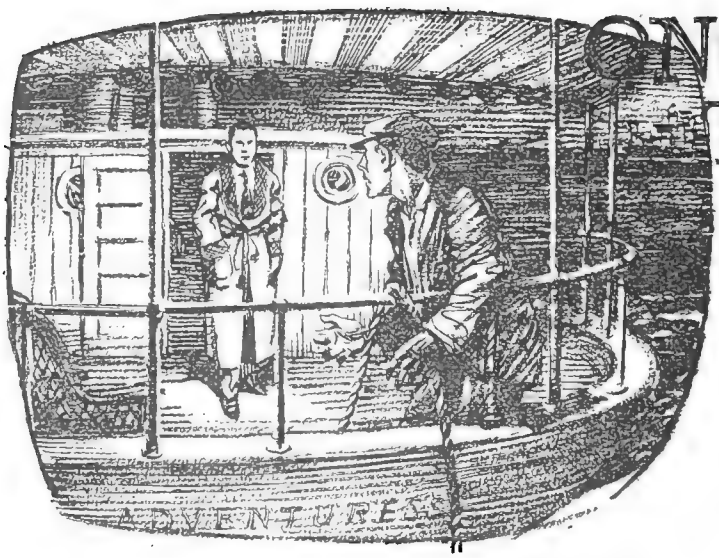

ONCE A THIEF

by H·KEITH TRASK

Author of "Two Fighting Men"

"TRY to beat it on me, will yeh, yeh—— ——little——! I'll learn yeh!" With a parting well-directed kick "Muggsy" Sylvanus sent his crew sprawling upon the deck of the *Harbor Girl*.

Larry Chisholm picked himself up, limped forward and sat down on the samson post. His thinly-fleshed fifteen-year-old body trembled despite his efforts at self-control. He winked his blue eyes violently but could not keep back the scalding tears—tears born of anger and disappointment rather than pain. Larry was too wonted to blows to mind a kick or two.

But this time he had surely thought to make his escape from his loathsome bondage. Muggsy had been so drunk last night that, when Larry sneaked away from the crazy shack on the water-front, he had figured on at least a day's start. Knowing but little of the world outside South Brooklyn, he had hidden close to his accustomed haunts until he could get his bearings.

Alas for his hopes! Muggsy, a practised toper, awoke two hours before dawn with a tongue like a Persian rug. Desiring service, he missed his slave and divined what had come to pass. The capture was effected shortly after sunrise.

While his master was inducing the motor to start, Larry eyed the rickety wharf and adjacent terrain. Should he make another dash for it, trusting to speed? He sighed. What was the use? Without money he could never get far enough away to avail.

Heading the *Harbor Girl* out through the Bay Ridge anchorage, Muggsy enlarged upon his previous text.

"Don't yeh never try that on me again," he warned. "Sure as yeh do, I'll turn yeh up to the cops. If yeh t'ink I'm bluffin'—call me an' see!"

Larry had no desire to call, nor did it comfort him to reflect that Muggsy and the harbor police were not on terms of any intimacy; that, indeed, it was a standing grievance with the crews of the little police launches that they were unable to hang upon Captain Sylvanus anything sufficiently definite to induce a judge to send him where he belonged.

By day purveyor of fresh water to and buyer of junk from the coasters and yachts that frequent the anchorage, Muggsy utilized these activities to cloak the more profitable pursuits of the dark hours and did it so skilfully, both as to acquisition and disposition, as to be the envy of his fellows in the craft.

Larry, an unwilling participant in the labors of the night, believed implicitly that Muggsy could so frame him as to deprive him of even the modicum of liberty he enjoyed aboard the *Harbor Girl*, while the arch-criminal himself went free. Nor had Muggsy neglected to paint with a master hand the horrors of the State reform school.

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Having been an inmate of the institution, he was well qualified to speak.

The *Harbor Girl* cruised back and forth through the anchorage, filled a schooner's tanks and purchased a shot of discarded anchor chain from a Danish tramp. All the while Muggsy was watching a big steam-yacht, lying far out toward the channel.

Along in the afternoon a power-tender put away from the steam-yacht, and simultaneously a square of blue bunting indicating the owner's absence fluttered from her starboard main spreader. Muggsy promptly shifted his helm and headed for the vessel.

As the junk boat rounded under her stern to come up to the port gangway, Larry, sitting on the samson post, spelled out the name in gilt letters under her counter:

ADVENTURESS
New York

The boy had seen many steam-yachts but never before one so large and handsome as this. He had, too, often vainly speculated upon the true purpose of such vessels. Muggsy's explanation that rich guys used them to sport in seemed a lie on the face of it. Surely, nobody in the world could have money enough to support a fourteen-hundred-ton steamship for purposes of pleasure alone.

Muggsy let the *Harbor Girl* drift toward the gangway. A man in the uniform of an officer leaned over the wing of the yacht's bridge with an eye solicitous for her white paint. But Muggsy was too skilled a craftsman to commit any *faux pas* like fouling the larger vessel. He held his power-boat off abreast the bridge and hailed.

"Hey, Cap, need any water?" He knew well enough that yachts of this size distil their own water, but the hail afforded fair excuse to give the ship lightning scrutiny for portable property.

The man on the bridge silently shook his head.

"Maybe youse has some old junk to sell," Muggsy suggested. "I'll treat yeh fair, Cap."

At this the mate wavered, scratching his head. He appraised Muggsy and his boat dubiously. It so happened that he had that morning been condemning a lot of junk, the discards of repairs from the long cruise they had just finished. Such stuff was legitimate pickings to him. In the end, Captain Sylvanus was bidden to step on board and make a price.

While he waited on the *Harbor Girl*, Larry eyed the two deck-hands, stolidly wielding boat-hooks from the accommodation ladder to keep her in her place. They were squareheads, for whom Muggsy had taught him to entertain a noble scorn. He reflected that things go very wrong in this world. Here he was, in slavery—and those two thick-witted scowegians could be dressed in natty uniforms, draw good money and live aboard that floating palace.

A HAIL from Muggsy roused him. Barely able to credit his luck, he heard himself ordered to come aboard and transfer the purchases while seller and buyer closed the deal and sealed the bargain with a wee nippy in the mate's quarters.

Larry stepped through the gangway into an enchanted land. His route to the condemned stores under the forecastle head led him by the deck lounge in the forward house. As he passed, he looked in upon such splendor as transcended his wildest dreams. In the middle of that splendor a boy of about Larry's own age, his person disposed in an easy chair and his feet upon a settee, was reading a book as indifferently as would Larry aboard the *Harbor Girl*.

Two trips Larry made, laden with stuff, and each time he hesitated before that open door. Returning for the third load, temptation overcame awe of his unaccustomed surroundings. He stopped and frankly stared. And, as he stared, the unreasoning hostility of his kind took hold upon him. He yearned to have that dress-up stiff ashore in some quiet place where he could punch his face and drag the white pants through the mud and generally alter the baby-doll until he more nearly resembled a regular guy.

Possibly it was telepathy that made the object of his desire glance up from the book. For thirty seconds the two looked at each other, Larry bristling like a pugnacious dog, the other boy plainly puzzled by sight of him.

"Hello, where did you drop from?" he inquired at length. Tossing the book upon the settee, he rose, sauntered to the door and examined Larry with leisurely curiosity.

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"My hat, but you look a scarecrow," he observed critically but without sting.

"Aw, go—" Larry checked the insult halfway.

There was something about the gink that you couldn't help liking, in spite of his clothes. His smile was so easy and confident, his manner so assured. The waif fell suddenly abashed. The other kid appeared to be no older than himself, yet he acted as if he were grown up.

"How did you come aboard?"

"I'm gittin' de junk Muggsy bought."

The questioner nodded.

"I see." Once more he inspected Larry from head to foot. "Do you like the junk business? I wouldn't call it a dressy profession."

"I ain't stuck on it—not wid Muggsy Sylvanus, anyways," Larry admitted, shifting uneasily from foot to foot. Then he had a sense of having said too much. His affairs were no food for the mirth of this alien from another world. "Muggsy ain't so bad at dat," he added.

He moved an irresolute step or two. If he didn't get back on the job, there would be trouble, but he didn't quite know how to break away.

"Wait a minute." The other youngster, fishing in his pocket, produced something that he pressed into Larry's palm. "Here, take this. I say, what's your name?"

"Larry Chizzum."

"Well, glad I met you, Larry."

On the words he returned to his book.

Making sure that Muggsy was not spying, Larry glanced at the folded paper in his palm. A big V smiled up at him—more money that he had ever before possessed.

"Hey, youse, t-tanks," he stammered.

That unaccustomed word fell awkwardly from his lips.

The donor of the five-spot waved a careless acknowledgment without raising his eyes from the book.

"C'mere," Muggsy commanded, once they were clear of the yacht.

Quaking inwardly, Larry obeyed. Had Muggsy smelled the five concealed in his ragged overalls? To Larry that money talked freedom. He could go a long way from Muggsy with all that coin.

However, the master mind was running in another channel.

"Didja see that three hundred fathom o' brand-new six-inch manila coiled on de after gratin'?" he inquired. "We'll go sing it a love-song tonight."

"Say, yeh ain't——"

"Ain't what?" Muggsy interrupted sharply.

"Nothin'," Larry told him sullenly. Until ten minutes ago gratitude had been a sentiment utterly wanting in his life, but something inside him revolted with the announcement of Muggsy's purpose. It seemed such a dirty deal—after the five-spot. He wouldn't go. He'd sneak away early in the evening.

But he did go. Muggsy, warned by the *contretemps* of the previous night, kept strictly sober and never let him out of sight until, Larry at the oars, they pulled out through the anchorage in the *Harbor Girl's* dingey. On such an expedition, powerboats are too noisy to be expedient.

The night was dark, ideal for their purpose. The shore lights lanced long reflections over the quiet water, but at a short distance the hulls of the anchored vessels became no more than heavier shadows, save where a riding-light cast flickering radiance on a bit of rigging or section of upper works. Far beyond, an occasional lighted window, high up, indicated a late worker in a Manhattan skyscraper.

When still well away from the yacht, Muggsy growled a command and Larry ceased rowing. Thereupon the captain muffled an oar with a bit of old rag, dropped it into the stern sculling notch and began to shoot the dingey forward with an easy, noiseless sweep.

Anchor watch would be kept on *Adventuress*, but it would consist of two men at the most, and they would be yarning or drowsing somewhere about the forecastle. In absolute silence the dingey came up on the yacht's quarter. For a moment she was exposed to the rays of the lantern on the stern flagpole; then she slid into the blackness under the counter.

Larry was so well drilled that there was no occasion for speech. Holding to the yacht's rudder-post, Muggsy maneuvered until, by standing on his shoulders, Larry could reach the scuppers. He drew himself unwillingly up, scrambled over the bulwarks and dropped on deck with the stealth of a raiding cat. His bare feet took him noiselessly to the hawser coiled on the grating by the taffrail. The quarterdeck awning was spread, and by bending double he

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merged with the gloom under the bulwarks.

Inwardly seething, he nevertheless went about the business with care and skill. Passing the free end of the hawser overside, he began to pay it down inch by inch, watchful that the manila touched no part of the hull, lest some vibration, communicated to a supersensitive ear, betray and ruin him.

Muggsy, holding to the rudder-post with his left hand, faked the hawser on the dingey's bottomboards with his right. It was a ticklish job to hold the boat in position against the tide and work noiselessly. A good part of the plunder had been transferred when a passing tug shot a betraying gleam of light in his direction. He remitted his labor to straighten up and fling after her a muffled curse.

The tug passed on, and the first swells from her progress rocked the boat. Caught partially off his balance, Muggsy grabbed at the rudder-post. The dingey drove forward and her well-puddinged bow rammed the counter.

The resulting muffled thud clamored in Larry's ears like the crack of doom. Instantly he dropped flat and waited for the hand of justice to grip his shoulder. Years passed, and nothing seemed to happen. Once he thought he heard a noise by the after companion, but there was no repetition.

"Hey, git busy," came finally in a hoarse whisper from under the counter.

Obediently Larry began again to pay down the rope. Sudden paralyzing radiance flooded the quarterdeck. He dropped the hawser and faced about like a trapped animal.

The boy of the lounge was standing just inside the companionway, a hand still on the light push-button. The other hand reposed in the pocket of a gorgeous silk dressing-gown.

"Don't move—I've got you covered!" Suggestively he wiggled something like a finger in the pocket of the dressing-gown.

The warning was unnecessary. Larry crouched over the hawser, bereft of the power of motion or speech. Caught with the goods! And by this kid. That hurt worst of all. The other boy advanced upon him, peering past the light.

"Why, it's Larry Chisholm—I never expected to see you!" He withdrew the hand from the pocket and wagged his head deprecatingly. "I hadn't somehow sized you for a river-pirate, Larry."

"I ain't no river-pirate!" Larry burst out, recovering his speech.

From the corner of his eye he estimated the distance to the rail. He could be over it and swimming under water before his captor could pull the gun. Yet he made no move. Greatly as he feared arrest and a prison term, still more greatly he desired to make his real position plain.

"I hear you say it," the other boy assented sceptically. "But appearances are against you, you know."

"Well, I ain't—anyways, I wouldn't be, on'y fer Muggsy," Larry qualified.

Advancing still nearer, the boy in the dressing-gown looked hard at him.

"Blaming it on Muggsy's not sporting," he protested. "What's Muggsy got to do with your being a crook?"

"Dis is what he's got ter do wid it!" Larry tore his shirt open, pointing to the purple bruises that disfigured the skin. "D'yeh t'ink I wanted ter double-cross yeh after you givin' me dat five-case note? I hadda come on dis job—like I have ter on all of 'em—or Muggsy'd beat de head off me!" He waved his arms in his terrific desire to be convincing. "Wouldn't any guy radder be square if he could?"

AROUSED to its duty at last, the sleepy anchor watch came tumbling aft and with it, the mate.

"What's up, Mr. Peter—who's this boy?" the officer questioned.

Appraising Larry, the boy, Peter, ignored the question.

"You know, I believe you would rather be square," he decided. He turned to the mate. "This is Larry Chisholm. He came after our hawser, because Muggsy made him come."

The mate saw the depleted coil. With an angry oath, he strode to the taffrail and looked over. A cut end dangled below him.

"The devil's got half of it," he wailed. "Set the police signal!" he directed one of the watch.

Police! Larry turned to the rail, but something held him back.

"Not so fast, please, Mr. Perkins," Peter demurred. "We'll just entertain Larry for the rest of the night and let my father deal with him when he comes back. You know the skipper likes to handle these things himself."

The mate grumbled but must perforce

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obey. Larry was gently but securely locked in the boatswain's store. Five minutes later the mate brought him blankets and food.

"There, gol-ding ye," Perkins exclaimed somewhat pettishly, for his Yankee sense of fitness had been outraged. "Mr. Peter wants ye coddled instead of hided the way ye'd oughter be!"

The prisoner was too excited to sleep. Probably he'd have to go to jail in the morning, but he was clear of Muggsy, and that was almost worth a stretch of time. Anyway, there was no use worrying about a future that he was powerless to change. But he did worry lest Peter might still think him a crook by choice.

"I gotter make that kid believe I wouldn't 'a'done this if I didn't have ter," he repeated again and again.

In the morning the mate appeared and conducted him to a room under the bridge, where a quiet, elderly man sat behind a desk. The room was filled with queer, shiny engines of which Larry could not guess the use. Peter's voice roused him from their contemplation.

"This is the skipper—my father, Larry."

Under Edgar Warden's gentle questioning Larry's heart was soon unlocked. He poured forth a flood of explanation but never a plea for mercy. Then came his inchoate hopes and ambitions—secrets that he had never before voiced to human ear. As the millionaire and the confessed river-pirate talked together, Peter's eyes never left his father's face.

"Skipper, why can't Larry stay with us?" he demanded excitedly at the end of Larry's talk. "He says he wants to be a ship-captain. Mr. Janeway can teach him other things—and where could he learn as much navigation as from you? Some day he might help with the work."

"I hadn't thought of that," Edgar Warden mused, glancing from one boy to the other.

This young savage was hardly the companion he would choose for his son, but he could trust Peter. Moreover, whatever the accident of Larry Chisholm's former environment, good material was there, plastic to the molder's hand.

"Suppose we kept you here and gave you a chance to learn something of the sea beyond mere navigation—would you work hard to make good?" he asked Larry.

"Me—stay here!" Larry cried. "Mister, I'd eat dirt fer de chanst."

Young Peter went to his father and flung an arm across his shoulder.

"Let's keep him, Skipper."

Reading his boy's face, the father sighed.

"Very well, so be it," he decreed.

LOSING the wife he adored when Peter was but three, Warden had shut himself up aboard *Adventuress* with his boy and his sorrow. A man of inherited wealth and scientific training, Peter and oceanography became the absorbing passions of his life. Himself a licensed shipmaster, he navigated his vessel to all far places to study the deeps of the sea. It was his dream that Peter should carry to fruition the work that he could not hope to complete.

Constantly associating with his father, his tutor and his father's friends, Peter had matured far more rapidly than the average lad of his years. He had met everybody worth knowing everywhere, for princes, poets or pot-hunters were equally welcome aboard if they were interesting, but he had seldom enjoyed more than the passing companionship of young people.

Of late he had become restless and unsettled, craving the youth that was passing him by. The father had recognized the signs and had realized that soon there must come a separation. But the man dreaded the day and would postpone the inevitable as long as he could.

Probably Peter's most compelling motive in shielding Larry was his unconscious fellowship with the waif. Having nothing in common on the surface, the boys were, underneath, blood brothers of the great fraternity of youth.

The new world of hope and happiness that opened to Larry kindled in him a flame of passionate devotion to his benefactors. Peter became his idol. With Peter's example before him and Janeway's careful coaching, his uncouthness of speech and manner rapidly melted, and Peter accepted him as comrade and equal.

Larry absorbed knowledge as a dry sponge soaks up water. His inborn sea instinct and training with Muggsy made elementary navigation easy. Later, by gradual stages, Warden led him on, unlocking for him wonder treasure-houses of his chosen element that remain forever closed to the average mariner.

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When the boys were eighteen, Peter left them to matriculate at a famous university. Sorely as he missed his son, Larry was a great comfort to Warden. Acting as second mate, he was better qualified to stand a watch or set a course than most officers several years his senior. He was far more than a member of the crew; he was one of the family, assistant and collaborator in the research work.

Through the four years of Peter's absence both looked eagerly forward to the day when he would return to them with his degree. After that would come the work, the investigation that Warden had planned as his son's official introduction to the scientific world.

Hidden in far-off Bering Sea was a secret that Peter was to disclose—with Larry's help. Telling off the lessening months, Larry dreamed of the Work—he always thought of it in capitals. Over and over again, Warden and he planned how it should be done, what part each was to play. It was a wonderful prospect for the waif of the *Harbor Girl* to contemplate—his name to figure with Peter's. Perhaps—perhaps there might even be two fellowships bestowed for that secret.

FIRST MATE LAWRENCE CHISHOLM, at the helm of the power-tender, looked back at *Adventuress* with pride. Swept and garnished, her research gear stored ashore for the Summer, she was spick and span as only his weeks of anxious planning could have made her. Peter must not be ashamed of the old barkey before the friends he was bringing for a vacation cruise.

What would they be like, those friends? Throughout Pete's absence, his letters, reaching the skipper all over the world, had told of good times at Newport, Meadowbrook and Hot Springs, adventurous trips to New York and Boston. Reading them Larry sometimes wondered where Pete had found time for scholarship, yet time he must have found. Now he had graduated. This select party, under the chaperonage of the renowned Mrs. Judson Keeler, was to return some of the hospitality he had enjoyed.

Slowing as he neared the Battery landing, Larry eagerly scanned the group on the float. There he was—old Pete—in the checked suit. And that tall elegant, talking to two girls, must be Bill Keeler, Pete's especial friend and social sponsor. Larry had learned to be a trifle jealous of Keeler.

"Hello, Larry, you old clam digger!" Peter hailed as the tender drew alongside. "All aboard, people—this is Larry Chisholm."

As the guests boarded the tender, he rattled off a confusing string of names. Chiefly Larry's presentation was acknowledged by careless nods, although one or two vouchsafed him a word in passing. In spite of his determination to like Pete's new, swell friends, Larry was dashed. They didn't act like the people to whom he had been accustomed.

Peter took the helm and plied him with questions about the skipper, how the old ship was holding out and what changes had come in the crew. But he talked with one ear cocked over his shoulder. In the stern sheets, Keeler's high-pitched, somewhat effeminate voice was keeping the party in gales of laughter.

"Great boy, Bill," Peter chuckled after one witty sally. "Greatest ever. Wait till you know him. We're going into business together."

"Into business!" Larry echoed with a sudden sinking of the heart. "What kind of business, Pete?"

"Wall Street—Warden and Keeler—Members of the New York Stock Exchange. His old man will steer a lot of customers our way."

"But—but our work, Pete!" Suddenly the world had turned upside down.

"You and the skipper can do the work." Peter patted Larry's arm lightly. "Old scout, maybe you're satisfied to dig seaweed out of the briny all your life, but I'm not. I can only live so long, and I've wasted a lot of time already."

"What will the skipper say—have you told him?"

Pete must be fooling.

"I'll spring it on him first chance I get. He'll understand. Especially after Keeler's governor explains how much he wants me with Bill. Thinks I'll steady the old windmill."

While the guests were settling themselves in their quarters, the boat with the heavy baggage arrived. Larry, standing on the crew's accommodation ladder, superintended its transfer. He was still dazed by Pete's announcement. The last trunk was

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whipped aboard, and he turned mechanically to ascend the ladder.

Through an open port-hole above his head, Keeler's high-pitched voice floated out.

"The boat's all right, but, curse it, Browning, it's a rotten thing to introduce one of the hands as a family friend."

Rigid, one foot upraised, a dark flush slowly staining his cheeks, Larry awaited the reply.

"I wouldn't do it under any circumstances, of course. But there's a reason. Pete told me one night when he was confidentially soused. This Chisholm is a protégé. Seems they took him away from a crook or something when he was a boy."

"Better keep your hand on your money," Keeler rejoined. "The —— impertinence of asking me to know a reformed gutter-snipe! Let's go see if the girls are on deck!"

Holding himself very erect, Larry went to his room and dropped into the swivel-chair before his little desk. "Great boy, Bill. Wait 'til you know him!" A long time he sat motionless, staring at the wall. A steward passed along the deck, banging the dinner gong, but he did not stir. Then some one knocked.

"Why don't you come to dinner, Larry?"

"I don't want any dinner, Pete."

The other opened the door and stepped inside. Groping for the button, he switched on the lights.

"What's the matter? Not sick are you?"

"No."

Peter stared at him.

"What's wrong? You look dev'lish queer."

Larry rose.

"I suppose you have a right to know, Pete. Your friends are sore because you introduced a hired man to them."

There was a pause of a fraction of an instant; then:

"Where do you get bunk like that?" Peter demanded impatiently. "They've never even thought of such a thing."

Larry had not missed that pause.

"If you'll ask Keeler, you'll find that he has." He held Peter's unwilling eyes. "Keeler warned Browning to keep his hand on his money. Furthermore, he regards it as —— impertinence to ask him to know a reformed gutter-snipe!"

Peter flushed uncomfortably. His eyes dropped before Larry's.

"Did Keeler say a rotten thing like that? You must have misunderstood," he mumbled.

"No, I didn't misunderstand. And, when you get down to brass tacks, Keeler's right. I'm not in his class. I'm one of the hands—although it never occurred to me before that that made any difference."

With an attempt at nonchalance that failed dismally, Peter found a cigaret and lighted it.

"It doesn't make any difference."

The declaration lacked enthusiasm to Larry's anxious ears.

"Yes, it does," he corrected, laying a hand on the other man's shoulder. "It'll have to make a difference, Pete—if you're going to be a member of the firm of Warden and Keeler."

Peter shrank from the hand as if it had burned him.

"You're crazy," he declared with a hint of sullenness. "Come on down to dinner."

"No."

Moving irresolutely, Peter glanced at him, threw the cigaret through the doorway—shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, but you're the doctor. If you think best——"

His voice trailed off as he walked away.

Smiling a twisted smile, Larry went on deck to look out unseeingly over the dusk-shrouded anchorage. Pete might not realize it himself—Larry preferred to believe that he did not—but he was not sorry—he was relieved. In that brief talk, Larry Chisholm had ceased to be a brother to Pete and had become a problem—an embarrassment. Well, so be it!

Under way for the eastward the next morning at daylight, Larry took the bridge with the second mate to pilot *Adventuress* up the East River and through the treacherous Hell Gate currents. He tried to concentrate on the job, but he found it difficult to make instant decision on such matters as passing laden car floats and inbound Sound steamers.

Everything that Larry Chisholm might ever hope to become he owed primarily to Peter. Pete it was who had snatched him from the old life, had brought him his chance. Viewed in that light, there was only one thing for Larry to do. He must go away, since to stay was to embarrass Pete. But then—what of the work—and the skipper?

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KEELER, debonair and perfectly groomed, sauntered out on deck and turned leisurely forward. Larry, pacing the bridge, saw him, scowled. Hot resentment flooded through him. Why had that fellow come in—to steal Peter from them—to interfere with the work? Keeler mounted to the upper deck and made for the bridge ladder.

Larry confronted him at the ladder head.

"I'm sorry, you can't come on the bridge," he stated, keeping voice and manner courteous.

"You seem to forget I'm Mr. Warden's guest." The tone was maddening in its insinuating, subtle contempt.

Keeler would have pushed by, but Larry barred the way with an arm extended to the rail.

"Captain Warden does not care to have even guests come on the bridge, Mr. Keeler, except by special invitation."

"Don't forget your place, my man," Keeler told him haughtily.

"I'm not your man," Larry corrected. "I'm Mr. Chisholm, mate of this ship and telling you where you get off when I'm in charge. Please don't argue!"

"I won't—I'll have you fired for your insolence!" Keeler's voice was more than usually shrill as he descended the ladder.

Larry watched him with that twisted smile on his lips. Seven years of knocking around the world had not left him wholly blind. The irony of it!

As the yacht slipped past grim old Fort Schuyler, the skipper joined his mate. There was a little pucker of vexation around Warden's eyes.

"Larry, it isn't like you to be rude, yet Keeler is furious because I refused to discharge you on his complaint."

"Is he, sir? I only obeyed your orders and kept him off the bridge."

"You did quite right," Warden assured him. He walked over to glance at the compass and then rejoined Larry at the rail. "I can not see what Peter finds to admire in that chap. They have nothing in common, and I don't trust him."

"Perhaps there are things about him that you and I don't understand, sir," Larry suggested.

"Evidently," Warden agreed dryly. "Larry, have you noticed that Peter is changed in many ways?"

The one good thing that Muggsy Sylvanus had ever taught Larry was hatred of a snitch. To acknowledge anything of what Larry knew and felt would be to snitch on Pete. It was for him to tell—in his own time and in his own way.

"Why, no, Skipper, I haven't noticed anything."

Larry was engrossed with something far out across the water.

"Larry, it would break my heart to lose Peter—and somehow I have a feeling——"

The skipper waited, but Larry could find nothing to say. Then, walking rather heavily, Warden entered his workroom.

A WEEK later the *Adventuress* lay at Newport. Larry, his tunic cast aside, was flat on his back in his bunk. The ladies had long since retired, but the men were at poker in the lounge. Until he had seen the one shore guest safely landed, Larry would not be free to seek his own rest. It didn't matter. He could not have slept anyway.

The realization that Peter had turned against the work was breaking the skipper. More and more every day he turned to Larry for comfort, leaving the entertainment of the party entirely to Peter. He talked much of the work but never mentioned the name of him for whom the work had been planned.

If going away would win Peter back—but Larry realized that, in one short week, he had entirely ceased to count in Peter's life.

Through the bulkhead came a string of oaths. Pete was losing heavily and he was not taking it like a sport. That made Larry wince. He wondered why. He no longer cared what Pete did. Let him go the road he had chosen.

A hand fumbled his door. Peter, his color high and his clothes disordered, stumbled into the room. Larry sat up, reaching for his tunic.

"That fellow ready to go ashore, Pete?"

"No' yet. Say, Larry, got any money?"

"A little—why?"

"Cleaned out," Peter mumbled, dropping heavily into the swivel chair. "Ol' man's so sore I dassen't strike him. Gotta have a thousan' t' square up!"

"A thousand!" Heartsick though he was, Larry laughed.

"How much you got?" Peter hauled himself erect, blinking.

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"I may have twenty-five aboard here."

"Twenny-five!" The other winked portentously. "Quit y'kiddin', Larry. You always been ol' fox—saved your dough—never learned to be spender like ol' Pete. C'mon, be a sport—come across," he coaxed.

"What I have is in a New York bank, Pete."

The words had an astoundingly sobering effect. Peter turned a pasty white.

"I've got to have the money," he urged excitedly. "I've got to settle with Terwilliger before he goes ashore!"

"I can't help you," Larry assured him. "Surely, Pete, Terwilliger will trust you."

"You don't understand." Peter jumped up to pace the room. "If I don't settle before he goes ashore, I'll be a dead one. The bunch will be through with me forever!"

"I'd help you if I could, you know that," Larry reiterated.

His face working, fists clenched, Peter turned on him.

"—— you, you're holding back on me because you're sore," he raved, his voice quivering with the intensity of his sudden passion. "Keeler is right. You're nothing but a cursed gutter-snipe. To —— with you!"

He flung out of the room, raced aft along the deserted main deck.

The sun was well up when Larry assisted Mr. Terwilliger out of the tender to the club float. Once on solid ground, the night's heavy winner sank gracefully upon a bench in front of the closed station building.

"Buy me taxi like good feller," he requested.

At five-thirty in the morning this was no easy matter. When Larry returned with the desired article three-quarters of an hour later, Mr. Terwilliger on the bench and the tender's engineer on her cushions mingled their volumed snores.

Shaken into wakefulness, Terwilliger managed to enter the car. As he settled back on the cushions, he produced a great wad of crumpled bills, selected one and pressed it upon Larry.

"I don't want that," Larry told him curtly.

"Take it— 's easy money, ol' man—take it for stayin' outa y'r downey for me," the donor insisted. He sank back on the cushions. "Home, James!"

Staring at the crumpled bill in his hand, Larry shrugged his shoulders. Pete's money—from Pete's friend! The time had come for him to be going.

Later in the morning, a steward, with many apologies, aroused him from sleep with word that Warden wanted him. Dressing hurriedly, Larry obeyed the summons, to find Warden, Peter and Keeler talking together in the workroom. The skipper's face was very grave.

"It's a devilish awkward thing for me to have to tell you, Mr. Warden," Keeler was saying. "But there it is. I left eighteen hundred dollars in my room last night—and now it's gone!"

"It is more awkward for me than it can be for you," Warden assured him. "Are you quite certain that you have not misplaced the money in some way?"

"Pete saw me put it away."

"Yes, and, when Bill told me it was gone, Browning and I helped him hunt all over the room," Peter confirmed.

"Where did you put this money, Mr. Keeler?" Larry inquired, stepping forward.

"He put it in the dressing-table drawer," Peter answered for his guest.

Larry glanced at him. There was something in Pete's voice, a note of strain. Again he addressed Keeler.

"Are you in the habit of leaving hundreds of dollars in unlocked drawers?"

Keeler eyed him with open hostility.

"The unlocked drawer was on a friend's yacht," he pointed out contemptuously. "I had no reason to think that the money wouldn't be safe."

"Even so—" Larry began, but Peter interrupted, speaking breathlessly fast.

"Of course he thought it was safe. Don't be an ass, Larry." He addressed his father. "Skipper, we'll just have to make Bill's loss good. There mustn't be any fuss about this."

"Naturally I shall see that Mr. Keeler suffers no loss," Warden assented. "But we'll go into this matter a trifle deeper. As he says, and you agree, he was justified in supposing his money safe. When did you put it in the drawer, Mr. Keeler?"

"Just before dinner—when Pete came to hurry me up, in fact."

"Mr. Chisholm, who went ashore between the time dinner was announced last night and the discovery of this loss?" Warden addressed his mate with the formality he reserved for official occasions.

"Up to six-thirty this morning, the only

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boat to leave the side was the tender, when I set Mr. Terwilliger ashore, sir," Larry reported. "I can't tell what happened after I turned in."

"No boat has left since," Warden returned. "Therefore, the money must still be on board. It is unlikely that the tender's engineer could be the thief. Mr. Keeler, in what form was this money?"

"Most of it in large bills, twenties, fifties and hundreds. There's one fifty I could absolutely identify. It had been torn and there was a strip of paper pasted across the vignette so that the face was blocked out."

"That will simplify our task," Warden declared, rising.

"Skipper, what are you going to do?" Peter cried, springing in front of his father.

"The ladies, of course, are out of it, but every man on board must be searched," Warden told him firmly.

"S-searched—Skipper, you can't search our guests!" Peter pressed his hands against his father's chest. "You mustn't search!"

His voice went shrill; the hands beat against his father's coat.

Seeing him, Larry wondered how Pete could care so much what these people might think.

"Our guests will be as anxious as ourselves to have this matter cleared up," Warden pointed out.

"Excuse me, sir," Keeler interposed, his eyes barely flickering over Larry Chisholm. "You mentioned the tender's engineer a minute ago. Perhaps it would be interesting to ask the tender's commander what kept him ashore an hour."

On the words, seemingly of its own volition, Larry's hand went into his pocket.

"You mean Larry?" Warden frowned in quick displeasure. "We'll leave him out, Mr. Keeler. I'd as soon think of accusing my own son!"

"Sometimes old habits return on a man, nevertheless," Keeler purred smoothly.

Creeping nausea swayed Larry on his feet. He scarcely heard the vengeful suggestion begot of a petty hatred. Before his eyes swept a picture, blurring sight of Peter, crouched in his father's chair.

"Skipper, you can't search my friends," Peter croaked through dry lips. He ran his tongue over them, passed a hand through his hair. "Pay Bill his money and drop it. You can take it out of my allowance."

Catching Larry's steady eyes upon him he hastily averted his head.

But other words were ringing in Larry's ears.

"If I don't settle before Terwilliger goes ashore!" Pete had been broke, yet Pete had settled!

"Compromise will not do," Warden negatived firmly.

THE little room by some magic became a vast hall, crowded with attentive listeners. On the platform at the far end a man was reading a paper. He ended, and applause rang out. The chairman arose and stepped forward.

"Mr. Chisholm, your contribution to our science——"

Young Peter sprang up out of that audience with a snarling cry of rage.

"You're holding out on me because you're sore. Keeler is right. You're nothing but a —— gutter-snipe!"

The picture faded.

Warden's hand was on the door-knob.

"By all means let us get it over. Peter, will you tell your friends, or shall I?"

The something that Larry gripped in his pocket grew heavy as lead. What difference, whether Peter had really said that again or had merely begged his father to get the ordeal over? What difference? Pete had said it last night.

"Gutter-snipe." Let it stand. An invisible force began to draw that weight from his pocket. One twitch of the wrist overside as he went on deck and the gutter-snipe would be safe—safe—and Pete would be irrevocably damned. He had paid Terwilliger a thousand. The remaining eight hundred would be found upon him—and the skipper would find it.

Why had Pete put on that gorgeous silk dressing-gown? He hadn't seem him wear that in years. And why did Pete, crouching in that chair, bring back memories of a ragged waif, cowering over a ravished coil of hawser?

"Not so fast please, Mr. Perk—" No, that wasn't what Larry wanted to say—"Keeler, is that your bill?"

"I thought we'd find the thief!" Keeler exulted. He took the leaden weight from Larry. "This is the torn fifty I described. Look for yourself, sir!"

"Where did you find this, Larry?"

Curious that Larry hadn't noticed how

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old and haggard the skipper had grown; never until now had he seemed so shaken.

"In the drawer, sir, where Keeler said he put it."

"Larry!"

Was it Pete or the skipper who had cried his name that way? He wished he could be sure. It would make a difference when he was thinking—later—after he had exchanged his good name for a number.

"You stole the money—you? I can't believe it!" Fumbling like a blind man, Warden found support. "I can't believe it—I won't believe it," he reiterated.

"What have you done with the rest?" demanded the practical Keeler.

"Sent it away this morning. That's what kept me so long ashore, as you suspected," Larry told him curtly.

"I can't believe it," Warden insisted.

"You've forgotten something, just as I had, until I was reminded," Larry answered, but looking at Peter as he spoke. "You know I'm only a reformed gutter-snipe——"

"But why? If you needed money——"

"I was ashamed to ask you. It's simple enough," Larry explained hurriedly. "I didn't have much fun when I was a kid. Then you picked me up, and, until I struck New York this trip, I've worked pretty hard. I'm not complaining. I lov—liked the work. But I wanted some fun. I had the fun; then I wanted to keep up with the crowd, and I had to have money to save my face—so I took the money. It's very simple, you see——"

"Too blooming simple!" Peter burst into hysterical laughter.

Peal on peal bent him double, wrung streaming tears from his eyes.

"T-too blooming simple," he repeated, regaining a measure of self control. "Larry, you're a rottener liar than I am thief—and that's pretty rotten!"

He went to Larry, took him by the shoulders and forced him to confront the skipper.

"Look at us—him a liar and me a thief! Aren't you proud of your gutter-snipes, father?"

"But, look here, Pete, this is pretty thick," Keeler protested. "Somebody took the money, and Chisholm is the man who has it."

"He has one measly fifty. I suppose that with his usual good taste Terwilliger gave him that for a tip. I remember paying it to Terwilliger and being in a cold sweat for fear you'd notice. I tell you, Bill Keeler, I took your money. Here's what's left!"

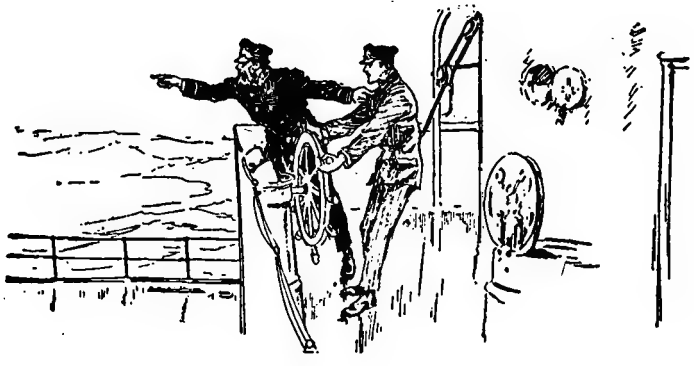
"This is pretty thick," Keeler asserted again, picking aimlessly at the bills Peter flung down on the table.

Social adept though he was, he was nonplused. His previous experience furnished no precedent to guide him in a case like this.

"I assume that you will be kind enough not to mention this incident to others," Warden suggested gently.

He rose, threw an arm across the shoulders of Peter and Larry, smiled meaningly at Keeler.

"Also, perhaps you will be glad to leave me alone—with my gutter-snipes."



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PROMOTERS

by G·A·WELLS

Author of "The Kidnapers," "The Rag and the Roaring Giant," etc.

DUKE GARVIN, one of the many engineers employed on the Canal, sat in a chair tilted at a steep angle against the wall of his headquarters shanty. His gaze passed out through the long rectangular window in the opposite wall and fixed itself malevolently on a snorting, rooting, rattling steam-shovel a quarter of a mile or so up Culebra Cut. A rancid native cigaret dangled limply from his sagging lower lip. His whole attitude was expressively disconsolate and dejected.

To be marooned in Panama at any time of the year was bad enough, so Garvin thought, but to be marooned in that sun-blasted country when that greatest of all days to Americans—the Fourth of July—was only seven days distant was damnation profound. It actually pained Garvin when he visualized a certain café back in New York. He longed to sit at one of the tables therein, waiters on the jump to keep him supplied with drinks suitable to assuage a white man's thirst and toast the great American day.

But there was no chance of his seeing the inside of that New York café this year. In Panama he was, and in Panama he must remain, taking his pleasure as he found it. Though drink of various brands and degrees of strength could readily be found in the saloons at Empire or along Railroad Avenue at Gatun, it certainly could not be drunk in that New York café. In Garvin's estimation that made a vast difference.

The engineer's unhappy reverie was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of one "Slim" Harper, one of the myriad Government timekeepers, Garvin's personal friend and chrony. Garvin turned his head, nodded a perfunctory greeting and surveyed the newcomer with critical eyes from head to feet.

Slim Harper was a man about thirty and rather dapper in appearance. From his blue eyes sparkled the light of a thousand devils. His skin was as brown as oak stain. He wore the eternal white shirt and khaki trousers whose bottoms were tucked away in the high tops of lace boots. A Texas hat was cocked at an impudent angle on his head.

Garvin grunted his disapproval at the evident complacency of his caller.

"Slim, how do you get that way?" he said, throwing away the stub of his smelly cigaret with an impatient gesture.

"What way, Ike?"

"How do you manage to keep cheerful in a God-forsaken hole like this?"

"Panama is the garden spot for me," replied Slim.

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"No accounting for tastes," grumbled the other. "For twelve cents I'd pack up and pull a fast leg out of this hole!"

"You'd come back."

"Don't kid yourself, Slim. I've got a belly-full of this. A man's a fool to throw away his life in a place like this!"

"Rave on, brother," chided Slim. "You couldn't stay away from here if you busted a leg trying. I know because I've tried it myself. It's in the blood. We're confirmed jungle-rats, old man, and either one of us would trade a corner lot in Wall Street for a square rod of raw jungle any day of the week. You know it."

"Aw, you're sick in the head!" snapped Garvin peevishly.

"It's a fact," maintained Slim. "When we die, we're likely to be camped out in a howling wilderness, and eventually both of us will find indecent burial in the belly of a jackal or a bald-headed buzzard. I'm already resigned to that ignoble fate. But never mind, Ike; the glorious Fourth is on its way to lift us out of the slough of despond."

"The glorious Fourth means nothing a-tall in my young life this season," responded the engineer gloomily.

"Remember last year, Ike?" grinned Slim.

"Do I?" The engineer groaned miserably. "A crowd of us guzzled hair-oil and vinegar all day, and about midnight the Z. P.'s gathered us up out of the streets and herded us in a horse corral at Empire to sleep it off. Do I remember last year! Wow!"

"By the way, Ike, I understand the colonel intends to close the drink joints this year," said Slim tantalizingly.

Another groan passed the lips of the engineer.

"It never rains but it pours," he sighed.

"If it poured something nice, you wouldn't care, would you?"

Garvin snorted disgustedly.

"Some good fairy's been giving you three wishes?" he croaked.

Slim winked a mysterious eye and seated himself on the edge of the blue-print table and proceeded to roll a cigaret.

"A good man with a good head can always hatch up something for idle hands to do," he said.

While Slim finished rolling his cigaret and lit it, Garvin studied his face. He felt sure that Slim had something particular to say to him, but Slim's countenance did not show it.

"Slim, if you had a mind, what would be on it right now?" he asked at length.

"That's what I dropped in to talk to you about," replied the other.

"Shoot or put your pistol away."

"Ike, how would you like to be half manager to a bull-fight?"

The engineer stared at his friend with unconcealed concern.

"Slim, is it fever or strong drink?" he asked.

"Neither," denied Slim. "I'm sane and sober, which you'll admit when I get through. The idea is, Ike, to provide amusement for the boys on the Fourth, and this bull-fight business appeals to me as the very thing to make the day hum. Of course, we can't pull off a bull-fight on the reservation, but——"

"Sure we can," was the ironical reply. "The colonel encourages them. He says they teach gentleness and mercy."

"But we can pass over the five-mile limit and pull off anything we like from a quilting party to a revolution. What's the matter with pulling off this bull-fight outside the Zone?"

"Nothing in the world. We lack a bull, a bull-ring, a toreador and a few other little things like that, but we may be able to get along without them."

"I never jump until I see the other side of the fence," said Slim. "I know where to get all those things you mention."

"Name the place."

"Zacapa."

"You're talking through your hat," ridiculed the engineer. "There hasn't been a bull-fight at Zacapa for over two years."

"Very true, but that doesn't keep us from reviving the sport for one day only," answered Slim. "I visited Zacapa yesterday and found a dandy bull-ring there. A cleaning and a few minor repairs will put it in good shape for us."

"Who's us?"

"You and I."

"You don't say," said the other sourly. "I suppose you found an assortment of bulls over there?"

"One bull, at any rate."

"Fighting variety?"

"Sure as you know. He belongs to a gent by the name of Pedro Gonzalez, who

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informs me that he is one of the finest bulls he ever raised from a pup. Pedro guarantees him to be a perfect fiend."

"Pedro's indulging in the national pastime of lying."

"Not any," responded Slim. "When I took one peep at the animal through the bars of his corral, I realized pronto that he came up to friend Pedro's claims. He's built like a prize-fighter and a battleship combined, and the glint in his eyes as we regarded each other through the bars made me feel that I could fly should I meet him alone and unhampered."

"Pedro doped your liquor."

"And on top of that he is a black bull," went on Slim enthusiastically. "You need never have any doubts about a black bull; they are holy terrors. I wouldn't trust a black bull as far as I can spit, and the best I can do is to slobber on my chin. Pedro calls his animal *El Diablo Negro*. The Black Devil! What do you think of that?"

"Not much; you can't trust a spig to tell the truth when he gets more fun out of a lie," said the engineer promptly. "Even so, a bull is only part of the game. Where is your toreador?"

"I found him at Zacapa, too. He's a pippin."

"Elucidate."

"Tiger," announced Slim.

The engineer spent an interval of astonished staring at his friend and comrade.

"Slim, wouldn't it be a good idea for you to go up to the hospital and let the doc have a look at your bean?" he said cynically.

"I OPINED that would fetch a howl," replied Slim with a laugh. "Now you listen to me and see how crazy I am. Do you remember that circus we had at Gatun a couple of weeks ago? You may also remember that the authorities wouldn't let the spielers set up their get-rich-quick outfits in the Zone. The circus therefore pulled stakes and moved over to Zacapa, where there was more latitude. Over there it hit the rocks. Went defunct, see? The butcher, the baker and the feed men attached the show, and, before it could depart, its owner had to sign his best and only tiger over to the *alcalde* to secure his debts."

"Keep going," urged Garvin when the other paused.

"Well, the *alcalde*, who is everything else with authority over there, regrets his bargain. He told me so yesterday. He wants to turn the tiger into hard cash in hand, but there isn't much demand for live tigers in this neck of the forest. Said *alcalde* therefore declares that, if he can't sell said tiger on the hoof, he is going to turn him into meat and sell him in the market. Thus circumstances fix it so we can get the tiger dirt cheap."

"*Cuánto?*" asked the engineer, beginning to show interest.

"One hundred dollars gold takes beast and cage complete," replied Slim. "When you consider that Royal Bengal tigers are selling in the Hamburg animal market for from one to three thousand dollars each, you get some idea of what a wonderful bargain this is."

"Who buys this bloody monster?"

"You and I. Each of us chips in two hundred and fifty dollars. We will buy the bull and tiger outright, rent the bull-ring and pull off the fight, taking all profits. We advertise the show extensively from Colon to Panama and back again; then we soak the boys five dollars a ticket for seats. How does that listen to you?"

The plan listened just about right to the engineer. He considered his friend's scheme unusual, even preposterous, but at the same time it held forth the promise of making the coming Fourth of July a day of pleasure, when otherwise it would undoubtedly be a day of grieving after unattainable things, such as the café in New York. Ike Garvin had taken more than one sporting chance in his life.

"Slim, you're the one best bet," he said finally. "Old man Barnum was faint-hearted compared to you, and I herewith take off my hat to superior genius. How, when and where do we take hold of this racket?"

"We've already grabbed root," replied Slim.

From the crown of his hat he pulled a handbill and unfolded it to the engineer's gaze. In full, euphonious, mouth-filling words and phrases, done in English and Spanish, the handbill told all that was true and a good deal of what Slim's imagination invented regarding the *Gran Corrida de Toros* to be held in the city of Zacapa on the *Cuatro de Julio*. It was a work of art.

"I bribed the printer at Ancon to strike

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off a few thousand of these for us," explained Slim. "All we have to do is plaster the Zone with them and then stand by with a barrel to catch the coin when she begins to rain. *Sabe?*"

"Five dollars for a seat is a pretty stiff price," said Garvin.

"Not if I know human nature," answered Slim. "This scheme is based on the law of supply and demand. The scarcer the article the higher the price, you know. There will be an unusual demand for amusement on the Fourth, and, if the colonel makes good his threat to close the saloons, it will be a rare article. In fact, we will have a monopoly of it over at Zacapa. Under the circumstances I think we are privileged to soak these galoots almost any price. They'll come across."

"That's so," assented the engineer. "Are the spigs in on this debauch?"

"Why not? A spig's *dinero* is as spendable as a white man's when it's gold. The price is one and the same to all, and nobody barred because of sex, race, color or previous condition of servitude."

Garvin remained silent while he rolled and lit a cigaret. Then he spent an interval blowing smoke rings and gazing thoughtfully up the Cut.

"Well, if we're going to pull this thing off on schedule time, we'd better get busy," he said at length.

"The engine needs a little oil," said Slim meaningly. He pocketed the several gold coins Garvin handed him and started for the door. "Now watch my smoke," he said and departed.

The following afternoon Slim called his partner on the telephone from Gatun.

"*Hola, mi amigo,*" greeted the engineer, recognizing Slim's voice.

"Notice any of our handbills sticking up down that way?" said Slim.

"You've blotted out the landscape with them. How's tricks?"

"Everything hooked and salted down; just got back from Zacapa," answered Slim. "Got the bull-ring for fifty bucks, and I guess cleaning her out and getting things in shape there will cost another hundred. Pedro split the difference with me, and I got the bull for two hundred and fifty. The *alcalde* thinks he stung me when I gave him a hundred for the tiger. I also slipped him another twenty-five for alleged police protection at the bull-ring. We should worry; I've got rid of thirty-eight hundred dollars' worth of tickets."

"Oh, boy, you delight me!" cried Garvin. "They're falling for it, eh?"

"Have to fight 'em away. By the way, Ike, I see another source of profit we ought to rope in."

"Mention it."

"Betting."

"Much going on?"

"I should say, sister! We're pulling the regular trade away from the lottery people this week."

"Think you can arrange it?"

"Don't be foolish. I've already opened a betting book, and they're flocking around me like bees around a daisy."

"Slim, I think we'd better leave that high finance stuff alone," cautioned the engineer. "We haven't got enough money to back a book."

"Don't need any," answered Slim promptly. "This is as safe as a baby's crib. We risk nothing and pull down a straight ten per cent. commission on every bet we handle. They come to us because we concentrate the whole thing, thus relieving them of hunting around for sports to cover their money."

"What's the plan?"

"Kentucky race-track *par is mutuels* system," explained the other. "No matter who wins or loses, we get our ten per cent. commission just the same. Beats Government bonds."

"Oh, that's different," said the engineer with relief. "Done any good yet?"

"About eight thousand dollars' worth of good, honey. That nets us eight hundred dollars, and we've only skimmed the top."

"You're a regular devil," complimented Garvin with a laugh. "By the way, Slim, would you mind telling me who's —— fool enough to bet on a bull pitted against a man-eating tiger?"

"The spigs are backing the bull to the limit. In fact, it's a heavy bull market."

"What do you know about that!"

"It proves the old saying about a fool and his money," came Slim's reply over the wire. "Well, I guess I'll toddle along back to Zacapa, Ike. The boss let me off for a week, and I won't be back any more till the show's over. I've passed the word that you are in charge over here. I'm leaving here for Pete McGill in about half an hour,

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and, as I come through your metropolis, I'll drop some things off to you. So long till then."

"That young man ought to be in Wall Street," was the engineer's admiring comment as he hung up the receiver and returned to his work at the blue-print table.

TRUE to his word, Slim came through on a sand train a few hours later and tossed a bulky package off to Garvin. The engineer carried the package to his shanty and opened it, to find a journal already containing several hundred names, together with myriads of little red betting coupons and several thousand yellow admission tickets. Before the sun set the day following, he was certain that his partner had left him no sinecure as betting commissioner and ticker vender.

The demands of the job were numerous and exacting. In answer to the lure of the handbills, men from all points along the Canal—white, black and indeterminate color—came personally or sent their friends with money for tickets and bets. Shortly the journal assumed the proportions of a city directory and the yellow tickets dwindled perceptibly. At the end of that day Garvin found himself entrusted with an additional fourteen thousand dollars.

And of all the money bet on the coming conflict the bull held a favorite. No matter how much tiger money flowed in, there was always a deficit that caused bull money to lie untaken. Even when, on the second, the tiger's backers demanded odds, bull money still predominated. The natives literally poured their money into the bull side of the book, to the astonishment and derision of the white men. It was evident to the whites that the natives were not conversant with the fighting qualities of a Royal Bengal man-eating tiger.

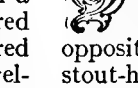
Garvin's shanty became the mecca for all sporting pilgrims. That was bad. Gambling in any form was strictly tabu in the Zone, even though the officials did a good deal of winking. Garvin wisely decided to snatch a week from his next Summer's vacation and give up the cares of engineering for the more pressing demands of the festival at Zacapa. Then back and forth along the Canal he went, dealing out the yellow admission tickets at five dollars a throw or exchanging the red betting coupons for gold and recording names in his book.

"Ike, you and that long, lanky Slim Harper are certainly playin' the devil with the work!" howled a foreman of steam-shovels to Ike as the latter clung to the rear of a dirt train en route to the Pacific.

"Got your tickets yet, Jim?" howled Garvin in reply.

The foreman grinned his defeat.

"Save two for me an' the wife on the front row!" he yelled after the departing train.



IN THE meantime Slim Harper had his hands full at Zacapa. In the matter of labor alone he found opposition that might have daunted a less stout-hearted man. Labor at Zacapa was an exceedingly scarce commodity; it was practically nil, due to the fact that those who were not too proud to labor were already at work on the Canal. Slim's field was therefore limited to certain "gentlemen" of native extraction who thought it more befitting a gentleman to strut the streets dressed to the last minute than to go on Tio Sam's pay-roll and live by coupon at the Government barracks.

Slim carried his case to the *alcalde* at his office in the Casa del Ayuntamiento.

"*Jefe*, old sport, won't you pull a friend out of a nasty hole and round up a bunch of men to help me over at the bull-ring for a couple of days?" he voiced his trouble in rattling Spanish.

"*Señor*, many things may be done for those who know how to get them done," replied the *alcalde* with an astute smile.

Whereupon Slim dragged forth his trusty money-bag and laid five ten-dollar gold coins upon the *alcalde's* desk. That official swept them up with eager hands.

"What are you paying men, *señor?*"

"Three dollars a day," replied Slim.

"You shall have them at once, *señor*," assured the *alcalde* suavely and bowed Slim out.

How the *alcalde* accomplished the feat of inducing the gentlemen to discard their glad rags and their canes and go to work, Slim was too wise in the ways of the land to attempt to learn, but an hour or so later he was agreeably surprized when confronted by about two dozen men who offered him their services for the aforementioned reward of three dollars a day.

"Now then, my dandy gentlemen, use your hands for working and not for chewing the rag and chase the dirt out of this

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bullring," he said to his force after accepting their services *en bloc* and recording their names in a book. "Any carpenters among you?"

"*Si, señor;* I am a contractor," answered one of the number, stepping forward with a graceful bow.

Slim regarded the "contractor" speculatively and detected the scent of cheap perfumes about him. Also his dusky face was highly powdered.

"You look more like a barber," was Slim's sarcastic comment. "All right, boy; I'll fix you up with a hammer and a saw in a minute. A couple of you come with me and help stick up the pretties. The rest of you get going with the shovels and brooms. Shake a leg now!"

The threat of the colonel to close the Zone saloons on the Fourth was put into effect. On the afternoon of the day before, notices of the ruling were posted on bulletin boards and in other conspicuous places. A howl of disapproval went up, but there followed that night a wild stampede to the liquor dispensaries, and the Zone saloons never before did such a brisk trade in bottled goods.

The Fourth came bright and clear. There was not a cloud in the sky, and a refreshing breeze blew in from the Pacific. Shortly after noon trains with their empty, jouncing, jolting cars began to shuttle back and forth along the Canal, pausing at every station to pick up human freight bound for Zacapa. They were dumped out in a tangled mass at Frijoles, the nearest rail point of contact with Zacapa.

The colonel, noting where sat the wind and doubtless seeking to temper his saloon-closing order, wisely did what he could to make the affair at Zacapa a success. In point of fact, the bull-tiger fight had his semi-official sanction. The yellow admission tickets to the arena at Zacapa were sufficient to warrant a ride on any train that day.

All roads led to Zacapa. That little town of adobe brick houses with their thatched roofs became a near metropolis with a mad, pleasure-seeking, pushing, shouting, singing, drinking mob of several thousand peoples of various nationalities and shades of color. The Tower of Babel had nothing on Zacapa that afternoon.

The narrow street leading through the town to the bull-ring was fringed with refreshment stands serving their patrons anything from coconut fudge to mescal. Money flowed like water into the hands of these merchants, and between noon and dark many of them became bloated aristocrats of wealth.

Bottles popped and clinked and liquor gurgled down myriad throats in an incessant stream. In various instances the rigid laws of caste prevailing were for the time put aside, and white men strolled the street arm in arm with their dusky brethren, both frequently drinking from the same bottle. Such was the utter abandon induced by the spirit of carnival.

There were white women and black women. Women from the West Indies as far east as Santo Domingo and women from South and Central America, some married to men according to a white man's notion, others joined in wedlock by the indigenous custom of free love and still others unmarried. There were white wives of construction engineers, shovel engineers, locomotive engineers and other engineers and of clerks and officials. Also pretty girl stenographers from the States, with their attendant and attentive male escorts from the Government departments, and a handful of tourists.

Everybody, in short, through whose veins flowed the red blood of sportsmanship and adventure and the spirit of holidaying put on his best bib and tucker and trekked over to Zacapa to witness combat between a savage bull and a man-eating tiger. The Appian Way to the Colosseum at Rome in the days of the Dictators must have looked something similar to the main street through Zacapa that afternoon.

Ike Garvin, one of the courageous pair who had made all this possible, rode over to the scene of the conflict in state behind four horses. He sat on the rear seat of his carriage smiling and bowing to friends passed on the highroad. On the floor between his feet stood a paymaster's chest packed to the lid with gold coins. In his lap was the betting book, complete down to the last page. On the opposite seat sat two husky Zone policemen, guns conspicuous in holsters, eyes alert.

Slim Harper, tired as a dog but still going, had done himself proud with his part of the work. The big bull-ring, swept to the last speck of dirt and repaired to the final nail, was aflame with flags and bunting. Old Glory fluttered in the breeze and entwined

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its folds with the ensign of Panama at a hundred points. The courteous hand of the colonel showed again in the band from Ancon that played in the band-stand.

By two o'clock the huge amphitheatre, seating more than four thousand people, was packed to capacity, and the overflow accommodated itself with swinging legs on the inner edge of the roof. It was indeed a howling mob that greeted Slim, master of ceremonies, as he marched to the center of the ring with megaphone in hand. His friends greeted him with a ground-shaking rumble of cheering.

Slim lifted a hand in signal to the bandmaster, and the band brought the crowd to its feet with the strains of the national air. The Panamanian national air followed, and the crowd resumed its seat.

"Ladies and gentlemen," screeched Slim through his megaphone. "On behalf of the management I thank you. As you know, the fight to occur here this afternoon is to be between a bull and a tiger. My friends, the bull is the most savage creature ever known to enter this ring, while the tiger is a ferocious man-eater from the jungles of Bengal. His known record of human slaughter is seventeen men, four women and a boy."

Slim was spreading himself. He knew absolutely nothing about the previous life of the tiger, but his descriptive statement sounded blood-curdling and gave the beast an air of monstrosity and atrocity.

"In a few minutes, my friends," continued Slim after taking a deep breath, "these two animals will be liberated into this ring at the same time. They will enter from doors on opposite sides. The management has taken all precautions to protect its patrons, and I am requested to assure you that there is no danger.

"I kindly ask that the audience will refrain from baiting or annoying the combatants, leaving them unassisted to carry their fight to a finish with nature's own weapons. In conclusion, dear friends, let me say that immediately after the battle has been decided those holding winning coupons will be paid their money by the cashier, Mr. Ike Garvin, who is stationed just outside the main entrance for that purpose. You who do not understand plain English ask your neighbor. Thanking you one and all for your patronage, the big show will now begin."

THE band struck up "A Hot Time In the Old Town Tonight," while Slim vacated the ring and made his way to his place in the audience. At a previously arranged signal from Slim, Pedro Gonzalez, who had been retained to put the bull through his paces, threw open the door in the ring barrier behind which the bull was penned.

The bull, startled for the moment by the flash of bright sunlight, dashed through the doorway into the arena. He did not move so swiftly, however, that Pedro, true to his national trait for brutality, could not plant a sharp-barbed banderilla in the animal's shoulder.

The sting of the dart brought a grunt of pain and anger from the bull, and he came to a quick stop. Pedro understood his bull. That sudden halt meant something to him; he quickly slammed the door shut. The bull whirled and charged. He struck the door in a cloud of dust, the impact of his head against the heavy timbers giving off a sound like the boom of a mighty bass drum. The door bent slightly but held, and Pedro sang a victory chant in Spanish oaths.

With a snort of rage and a smarting throb in his head the bull turned from the door and trotted defiantly out into the ring. He came to a stop about the center and with lowered head and bellowings of anger pawed the ground savagely, his wicked little eyes seeking here and there for one upon whom he could vent his wrath.

He was indeed a superb type of fighting animal and fully merited the roar of approval that greeted his appearance. The muscles fairly heaved under his jet-black coat; his rather short legs and lean yet well-rounded body were symbolic of speed, energy and agility; the stocky neck and heavy shoulders suggested immense strength; the horns of him, short and pointed, were perfectly curved to give the greatest possible measure of fighting efficiency. The Black Devil! Certainly his appearance justified the name.

Presently another roar came from the audience, and the bull, alert, stopped pawing and threw up his head with a quick jerk. He snorted at what he saw. In all his life he had never seen such a curious looking animal as that which crouched low on its belly at the base of the barrier across from him, its long tail flailing the ground and kicking up little clouds of dust.

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The bull knew instinctively that this animal, whatever it was, newly released from its cage behind the door which was even then closing upon it, was there to dispute his right to the sole occupancy of the ring—was there, in fact, to threaten his very existence and destroy him. And instinctively the bull felt rise within him all the enmity for the alien breed that he had inherited from an infinite line of ancestors, the first of whom, no doubt, had fought with just such breed as this in distant forest glades.

The very presence of this queer looking creature was a challenge. He accepted it. He lowered his head and pawed at the ground for a brief space; then with blood in his eyes and a bellow of rage he charged straight as an arrow toward that length of striped coat and lashing tail. The tiger valiantly held his ground, yellow eyes gleaming like balls of fire, until the bull was within a dozen feet of him; then he leaped to meet the charge.

Deftly, with the ease of the dexterous pugilist, the bull swayed his lithe body a little to one side, and one claw of the tiger barely scraped his rump. The tiger fared a bit worse, for, as his beautifully arched body soared by, the bull gave a sudden toss of his head and ripped a shallow rent in the tiger's belly.

Surprized at that first onslaught, they paused to survey each other with glaring eyes. The tiger licked his lips and whined fretfully about his wound; the bull grumbled to himself snortingly. Then, as if by mutual agreement, they charged again. Both missed their marks, checked themselves yards apart and wheeled in clouds of dust.

There was now no pause, not the slightest sign of hesitation. They leaped and lunged to the attack quickly, the scent of warm blood in their nostrils. The tiger sought the back-hold, a favorite of leaping animals and almost certain death to the victim. The bull was far too quick to be caught in that embrace; instinct warned him to avoid it. He dashed aside. With a far-reaching sweep of one paw the tiger managed to tear a patch of skin and flesh from his enemy's neck. The bull paid the debt by stabbing his enemy between two ribs with a sharp horn.

From that moment the combat raged unremittingly, the scene constantly shifting about the big arena as the combatants maneuvered for advantageous positions. The tiger tried again and again for his back-hold, but the bull deftly avoided it and concentrated his efforts on reaching a vital spot under the yellow-striped chest.

The big audience had fallen silent with eagerness and expectation. Excitement brought most of them to their feet, bodies bent forward and eyes straining to catch the least of those lightning-like strokes of claw and horn. The band came to a dead halt in the middle of a piece, and instruments were set aside and forgotten.

In scarcely no time the bull showed by his every move that he was the master of the situation and parried the stroke of claw and slash of fang with a completeness little short of marvelous. The Black Devil seemed invincible, and his adversary was indeed lucky when he landed a telling blow.

At length, so furious and rapid were the charges, the battle was totally blotted out by the great clouds of dust stirred up. For fully five minutes nothing could be seen by the sharpest eye in the audience. Then suddenly, with a piercing scream of fear and rage, the tiger, like some swift ship emerging from a thick fog-bank, burst from the gray curtain of dust and raced with long leaping strides toward the door through which he had entered the ring. The bull thundered a few lengths behind.

The door by which the panic-stricken tiger sought exit from the ring was of course closed, but, in his eagerness to get away from that terrible whirlwind coming so close upon his heels, he paused not in his mad flight until brought to a painful stop by collision with the door itself. He rebounded like a rubber ball, sprawled and clawed spasmodically at the ground a moment; then he leaped to his feet and resumed his flight along the base of the fifteen-feet-high ring barrier.

The bull lost his bearings in the dust and charged straight into the ring barrier but managed to keep his feet. Stunned momentarily by the terrific impact of his head against the hard unyielding planking, he stopped and snorted to himself. He caught a glimpse of a streak of yellow coursing around the ring at the base of the barrier and with a sobbing grunt and a lunge again took up the pursuit.

As he sped, the tiger, his eyes blazing with fright, sought for some means of

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escape, for some hole into which he might crawl and find protection from the black monster rushing relentlessly on his trail. But wherever he looked he saw nothing but the smooth, unbroken walls of the ring barrier. From all sides he heard the jeers and howls of derision of the mob, and, as if further to add to his already great troubles, came whole flocks of empty bottles that struck him cruelly and goaded him to madness.

His one instinct, the one ruling passion of his life at that moment, was to get away from that howling mob, those flying bottles and most of all from the black fiend who fought as he had never before known one of an alien breed to fight. His yellow coat was now plentifully mottled with his own blood that oozed from rip and tear, where either a sharp horn or the razor-edge of a shard of shattered bottle left marks. The combined physical pain and the intuitive ignominy of it all drove him to insane desperation. Nothing mattered just then but to escape from that ring.

He suddenly brought his mad flight to a stop, crouched low for the barest fraction of a moment and with all the strength that yet remained in him launched his big body straight up into the air toward the top of the ring barrier, fifteen feet above. It was a heroic leap, and it was ably assisted by a soul-jarring boost of his enemy's head against his hind quarters even as he left the ground.

He soared over the top of the barrier like some huge bird and landed unceremoniously in the lap of a burly Jamaican colored gentleman, who at the moment was shouting himself hoarse at the prospect of cashing the red betting coupon in his pocket.

The colored gentleman lost no time in going right away from that spot of danger and rose to his feet with an abruptness and fervor that spilled the clawing tiger into the lap of his next neighbor. That gentleman, too, rose and hastened away, passing the buck to his friends. Neither did they care for the present of a brute that lashed about it furiously with its sharp claws and fanged everybody within reach. They, also, departed in haste for more peaceful scenes. And then went the entire audience, rising to its feet, an immense circle of fearful humanity filled with a wild and compelling desire to get away from there.

PANDEMONIUM broke loose. The aisles instantly became filled with men and women, and those who could not reach the aisles took the short route over the backs of the seats toward the exits. Men shouted and swore in a dozen different languages, and women screamed at the tops of their voices. To these were added the screaming snarls of the maddened tiger and the yells of pain which followed his attacks.

The din was swelled by the bellowing roars of the victorious bull down in the ring. The native police, excited beyond control, screamed and cursed and whacked friend and foe indiscriminately over the head with their long sticks. This started numerous fighting groups that blocked the aisles and passages to the exits. A revolver exploded somewhere, and the panic of the mob was increased. It was indeed pandemonium.

Ike Garvin, who had installed himself with his chest of gold on a table at the main entrance, was never more surprized in his life than when the vanguard of that fighting, cursing, yelling throng surged through the none too wide doors and swept down upon him like a huge tidal wave. His table was upset, and with it the chest of money. The gold coins were spilled out into the dust like so much trash.

He fought against the wave with all his strength, but he had as well commanded the sun to stand still; there was absolutely no checking that tide of badly scared people, and eventually it carried him along with its current despite his best efforts to remain at his station and salvage what he could of the gold coins. The money, to his dismay, was trodden underfoot.

The single street of the town, far too narrow to accommodate such a mass of humanity, was packed and jammed from side to side. It became a narrow channel of milling heads, and the faces that looked through the dense clouds of dust kicked up seemed like ghostly faces peering through a gray mist. The dust also choked, and people fought fiercely for breathing space, which was not to be had with any effort.

Women, and men, too, were lifted bodily from their feet and literally borne aloft by the compactness of the mob, which fled wildly from it knew not what danger much as the Belgian refugees must have fled

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before the invading Hun hordes. Zacapa itself narrowly escaped being swept from its foundations that afternoon.

Presently, as Ike Garvin was being carried protestingly along with the current, he felt a hand close vise-like on his shoulder. He turned his head to look into the sweaty, dust-begrimed face of his friend and fellow promoter, Slim Harper. Slim was gasping for breath.

"Got the money, Ike?" he wheezed, wild-eyed, fighting for a position alongside of the engineer.

"Got ——!" snarled the engineer pantingly. "I'm lucky to have my life!"

"Huh? What? You haven't got—" Slim began, and then a cloud of dust choked further words.

Garvin laughed bitterly.

"We'll need a steam-shovel to dig that money out of the ground after this gang gets through running around over it! Slim, we're busted flat, and we can't pay a single bet."

Slim groaned.

"Well, we'd better vamose; that's all I've got to say," he said between coughs. "They'll be yelling for their money in a few minutes."

"Let's edge over toward the houses and see if we can't duck out of this," suggested the other tersely.

That was far easier said than done. Try as they would to force an oblique passage through the squirming mass, it was maddeningly slow work, and they at last came to the end of the street without accomplishing it. At the end of the street, however, the crowd began to spread itself out fanwise, and there they found comparative freedom of movement. There, also, the two promoters ran into a line of native policemen, reenforced by several Zone policemen, trying to the best of their small ability to halt the rush. It was a futile attempt, and they succeeded in doing nothing more than parting the stream, which flowed by on their either flank.

But the release from mob compactness and the resultant fresh air to clear dust-clogged and panic-filled heads brought the mob to some semblance of normality. It began to slow down perceptibly, and those at the farthest tip of the human fan began to stop and even to retrace their steps. The back of the panic was broken. One gigantic black set up a cry which was quickly taken up by his compatriots. Garvin caught his friend by the arm and jerked him to a halt.

"Hear that, Slim?" he cried.

Slim heard, and the sound of those angry, excited voices made him quake with dread. The winners were waving their coupons aloft and demanding to be paid. The avaricious, gamble-mad native and his duskier brother were sending up the pack howl of the mob in insistent tones. Presently the man who had started the furor espied the two promoters and made a dash for them, bowling over his weaker fellows as if they were ten-pins. Slim saw him coming and leaped to the nearest native policeman and jerked his stick from his hand.

"Get a weapon, Ike, and fight like the devil, or it's Katie bar the door for us!" he yelled to his partner.

Garvin saw the wisdom of the suggestion and lost no time in complying with it, though he had to knock his man down before he could get his stick. Then Slim and the engineer sprang to where the sergeant of Zone policemen stood with his squad of six men.

"Sergeant, it's up to you and your huskies to lend us a hand with these savages," Slim said with a grin to the sergeant.

"This may result in international complications, but we'll stick with you till the cows come home," growled the other.

He gave his men a crisp order, and, with clubs drawn and revolver holsters switched around where their weapons would be most convenient in case of need, they drew a circle about Slim and the engineer.

"We'd better try to feed 'em soft soap, Slim," counseled the engineer.

Slim laughed wickedly.

"Yeh, I guess that's about all we can feed 'em since we lost about forty thousand dollars belonging to them," he rasped. "We'll feed 'em a few good raps on their beans with our clubs, or we'll sweat blood. This is a fight, Ike, and don't you forget it."

A dense crowd of excited, shouting men had by this time completely surrounded the little group of Americans, and more men were coming from every direction, every last one of them waving aloft his red betting coupon. It seemed to Slim that every man in Panama must have held one of those little red coupons.

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"Stand back!" warned the sergeant when the inner fringe of the crowd began to touch him, and, to give force to his order, he put the flat of his hand against the nearest face and gave its owner a violent shove that sent him flying back against his companions.

"Let the *señores* pay us!" yelled a voice.

"Let the *señores* pay us our money!" agreed another.

Then followed cries from all parts of the mob, all burdened with the same demand to pay.

"You'll get paid in the neck if you don't beat it!" yelled the sergeant.

With the point of his stick he punched a dandified, insistent gentleman in the stomach. The gentleman struck the sergeant on the point of the chin with his fist. That was the spark that fired the magazine. Instantly the small group of white men became the object of a concerted, vicious attack from the mob. The clubs of the Zone policemen rose and fell rapidly, beating a veritable tattoo on the heads of those unfortunate enough to be within striking distance. The enemy retaliated with many good blows with their fists and kicks with their feet, and several stones were thrown.

GARVIN and Slim, desperate, realizing that there would be no reasoning with the coupon-holders, leaped into the fight with a will and played their clubs for all they were worth. They gave good accounts of themselves. Inch by inch, every inch stubbornly contested, the Americans drove the crowd back.

"Make for the Casa del Ayuntamiento!" yelled the sergeant, and, suiting action to his advice, he began to back down the street, the others keeping shoulder to shoulder with him, toward the big building standing about two hundred yards distant.

The mob met the move by returning to the attack with more fury than ever. The nine Americans fought as none of them had ever fought before and by dint of almost superhuman effort succeeded in holding off the mob until they backed up to the door of the Casa del Ayuntamiento. The door was closed and locked, and behind it they heard the cries of the frightened *alcalde* for them to keep off and take their troubles elsewhere. The sergeant answered the *alcalde's* plea by kicking the door open with one of his heavy shoes. The white men backed into the big room behind them, fighting like wolves brought to bay by a superior dog-pack. Garvin slammed the door shut, and, while he and the sergeant held it shut with their backs to it, the others barricaded it with the *alcalde's* desk and other articles of furniture.

"*Ah Dios mio!* You have brought me into disrepute with my people!" complained the *alcalde* to the sergeant.

"Your people will hold a funeral over your corpse if you don't cut out that whining, *alcalde*," replied the sergeant with a gleam in his eye.

The *alcalde* offered no further protest but went off into a corner, where he mumbled execration on the heads of these mad Americans who dared to make a citadel out of his office without so much as asking his leave.

A telephone clung to one wall, and the sergeant, looking about him for ways and means of getting out of the mess, uttered a happy exclamation and strode over to it. Luckily the phone connected with the Zone system of telephones; so he lifted the receiver from its hook and got connection with the police station at Ancon.

"Lieutenant, this is Howell," said the sergeant when a voice at the other end answered. "If you want to save nine good American lives, you'd better hustle over here to Zacapa with about fifty reserves at once, or sooner if you can. We're barricaded in the city hall and are standing off about forty million crazy spigs. Seven of us and the two Canal employes who pulled off that bull and tiger fight here this afternoon. You'll hurry? Thank you, sir."

TWO days later Garvin and his friend, Slim Harper, stood on the deck of an outwardbound ship, Colon to New York. On both their faces rested expressions of regret, yet each of them had heaved a sigh of relief when the steamer had cast off from the dock and headed toward the open sea.

"Slim, if those Z. P.'s hadn't taken a hand and rescued us from that mob of spigs we'd be counted as deceased by this time, wouldn't we?" the engineer observed at length.

"Piece of good luck, Ike; that's what I call it," returned the other with a grin. "We'd be tabu here the rest of our lives unless we found a way to pay those coupons,

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and, as neither of us is a millionaire, that's out of the question. We're playing the game safe by vamosing *pronto*, eh?"

"You said it, son," agreed the engineer. "The one redeeming feature of the whole thing is that that derned tiger got his!"

"By the way, what became of him?" inquired Slim, curious.

"The lieutenant who led the reserves over from Ancon told me that he found that cowardly brute stowed away under a rafter at the top of the bull-ring. He put a bullet through him. But there was some class to that bull, eh, Slim?"

"Yes—the black devil!" growled Slim, and he swore profanely under his breath.

THE LAW OF THE CITY

By CHARLES E. TERRY, M. D.

AND this is the Law of the City—
To buy and double and sell,
To strive and save and curse and crave
For the price of a seat in hell.

You may shrink from the fight with the forest,
From the struggle in mine and camp,
From the gnawing cold in the search for gold,
The hunger and thirst and cramp;
You may tell of the toil and travail,
Of the sun on the sweltering veldt,
But the story of such won't hurt o'ermuch
If the City's jaws you've felt.

You've an arm of brawn and sinew
And the edge of the ax is keen,
You've an honest fight and a dreamless night
Nor the sting of a might-have-been.
And the howl of the wolf-pack, trailing,
Is a warning fair and loud,
And the desolate wild is a terror mild.
To the crushing lone of the crowd.

The fang of the beast may tear you,
The trail may be weary and long,
But the stab in the back from the human pack
Breaks your heart with the weight of wrong.
No, better the silent places,
The scorch of the sand and sun,
A lonely trail than a harpy wail
When the dollar dance is done.

For this is the Law of the City—
To buy and double and sell,
To strive and save and curse and crave
For the price of a seat in hell.

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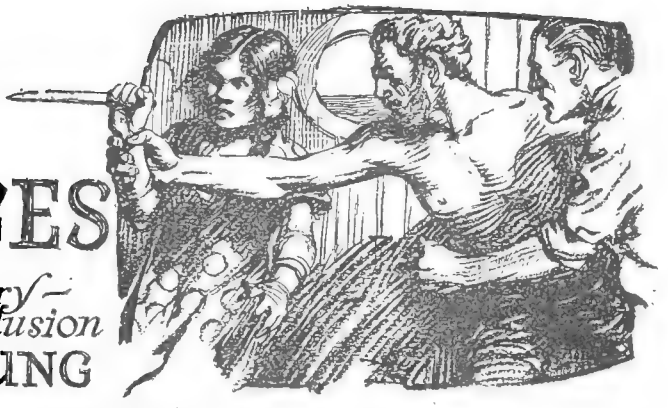

SAVAGES

A Four-Part Story—Conclusion

by GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Heathens," "The Devil's Own," etc.

WILLIAMS stood motionless. Of what he was thinking no one could possibly have told. His face was grim and fierce again, something terrific was stirring within him: then, as if called by some sorcery, as if conjured in vengeance from the deeps of his own brain, a lithe dark figure swept from behind him—an arm snatched, a blade flashed, and Lania was yanked backward, the blood streaming down her face from a deep gash that had scarred the bone—and the strong fingers of Uala's left hand were tangled in the mass of radiant black hair.

Again and again Uala slashed with the keen knife. Williams, his body contracted to leap, stiffened motionless: after the first fierce thrust Uala was not striking at flesh but at the hair. Lania screamed frantically and writhed in a maddened effort to tear herself away, and her slender hands were cut again and again on the knife. Gilbert Lang in a trance of horror repeated over and over:

"Don't! Don't kill her! Don't!"

At length Williams' hand flashed out and caught Uala's arm and jerked her backward.

"Now," cried the Samoan maiden triumphantly, "her soul dead!"

Uala had overheard and with the acumen of a jealous woman had understood. She had not tried to kill Lania. She had ruined her beauty. The hair might grow again, but now it was jagged and cut with only a few strands left at the full length that heightened the sense of loss. The hair might grow again, but from ear to lip would be as long as life a deep, red, disfiguring scar.

Lania sank to the floor. She was drenched in blood, and about her blood dripped. She ran her bleeding fingers across her face and moaned disconsolately. Her silken nightgown was spotted and stained with red; her hair was matted with blood.

"Oh, why don't you kill me? Why don't you kill me?" Lania cried, her face to the floor, her fingers clenched in the gash that streaked her face.

"God! This is awful!" said Gilbert Lang, sickened to the very inmost heart of him.

Williams muttered something indistinct. Gilbert Lang did not catch what it was, but it sounded a little like—

"God forgive me!"

But why, thought the boy—bound to give some reflection to such a strange sound from Williams' lips—would he blame himself for it?

"Her soul dead!" Uala shouted again, looking toward Williams for approval.

Uala knew about "souls." Missionaries talked of them. They were something that made people what they were and something that did not go into the grave.

"Yes, you have killed one soul and damned another," said Williams enigmatically and without turning toward Uala.

He stooped to the floor, lifted the unresisting Lania in his arms, carried her to the bed and laid her on it.

"Fresh water and some cloths. Cloths in that chest there."

As Gilbert Lang started for them, he became aware that the door was blocked with silent, staring natives.

"And the surgical case—by Banoo—get it," Williams called without looking around.

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"Oh, let me die! Let me die! Let me die!" the stricken woman said over and over. "Always misfortunate—always misfortunate——"

Then with sudden resolution she straightened up and cursed the world and those before her. And at last she cried out:

"Oh, Paul! Paul! Why didn't you kill them? Why didn't you kill them? Oh-hh—o!"

She sank forward sobbing convulsively, and the rush of tears streaked through the blood on her face.

"Go away—out—up on deck," said Williams to Uala and, glancing after her as she started out, told her to shut the door.

Then he and Gilbert Lang were alone with Lania.

She fought, like an insane woman, his efforts to wash her face. Water was splashed over the bedding and drenched her. Her blood-covered hands smeared his face in the struggle.

At length he told Gilbert Lang to hold down one arm, and, pinning the other fast under his knee, Williams washed the wound clean, sprinkled a clean white powder into it to keep the bandage from sticking and forcibly swathed her face to hold the bandage in place. Then he dressed her cut fingers and bound her hands behind her to keep her from tearing the bandages off.

"Why don't you kill me?" she sobbed, hysterical, in tears and anger. "You want me to live and be ashamed! Be miserable! Oh, I have never been anything else! —— you all! —— all men! They blame me for everything they have ever done! Oh, kill me! Kill me! Please kill me!"

"Now," said, Williams soberly to Gilbert Lang, "you can understand why the Lord in his wisdom said, 'Vengeance is mine!' We men are fools to try to right our wrongs!"

"You?" said Gilbert Lang.

"Yes. I am Clive Stanley!"

Gilbert Lang silently took from his finger a ring and threw it out of an open port-hole.

XII

WHEN Gilbert Lang got by himself on deck, he felt miserable. An overwhelming sensation of guilt rested on his mind, and, when he closed his eyes to shut out pictures of what he had just seen in the cabin, the pathetic figure of Lania became the more vivid, and her cries rang in his ears like echoes caught in a cave. It was useless to remember that she was an evil woman; it was as useless to remember that he had not wished, willed or caused her suffering. He felt guilty and hopeless—lost.

Lost, that is, to the world that knew his name—and looking forward saw himself such a wanderer as Williams. No one was to blame: least of all Uala. He did not know it, thinking in a general way that all uncivilized people are "savages," but it was rare for a Samoan woman to strike murderously.

Some people go through the world untouched by sin. These are few. But they are scarcely fewer than those who go through the world, ridden by passion, the cause or occasion for sudden deaths, jealousies, bitterness, blood-drawing work, and yet are untouched by a sense of guilt. Lania had been such a one.

Unable to shut out the thoughts that he wished to be rid of, he at last yielded to their insistence and gave himself over to reviewing everything that had happened. In retrospect he was amazed at himself for ever having undertaken the mission of vengeance, but, curiously, it meant nothing that Paul DuBeque had been killed. His entire feeling of guilt was centered on Lania.

After all perhaps there had been some truth in saying that she had sought to protect him on board the *Bebe* at her own risk. She at least had been gentle to him. Reflectively, he could not understand why he had come on murder bent to the South Seas. The fashioning of his brother's ring into a symbol of vengeance reoccurred to him as the tawdriest sort of melodrama: but he understood, or thought he understood, now why Williams had accepted his company.

And toward Williams he felt a strange new comradeship. There was some kind of a bond between them now. Why it should be so, he did not know. But it was. Williams had suffered in his life. He gathered that Williams had suffered bitterly from some cause even before his unfortunate first meeting with Lania. And to have been hanged!

A terrible world indeed, Gilbert Lang reflected. He had known so little of it until the last few weeks. He might almost have accurately have said until the last few

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hours. It was, in fact, within the last hour that he seemed definitely to have broken all the years that were behind him—to have broken them off as if he were no longer himself and had no connection, other than the same name, with the boy who had come into the South Seas.

Uala slipped timidly up to him and shyly, silently, looked at him. It was difficult to remember that she was the bronzed fury that had, as Williams said, slain the soul of the woman now moaning on the bed in the cabin below.

"You ver' angry?" she asked softly.

"No," said the boy, not to justify her, not to condemn her.

He simply did not blame her. She was a heathen, a savage.

"You love me?"

Gilbert Lang hesitated for a moment, a fraction of a second. But in that time he decided, or thought he had, his life. Yet in a way he was only affirming a previous decision. Why not love and marry her? Like a man who is drunk—and the effect of drunkenness is to be reached in other ways than by alcohol—he had lost his perspective on values, become inveigled in a kind of desperation that is heedless of the future, careless of results.

Only two courses were possible: either resolutely to turn from her and all that she represented, the South Seas, the free life of mingled irresponsibility and danger—the soothing fragrance of the lotus—or else unreservedly to yield. There was no middle course.

"Yes," he said, and Uala happily slipped her hand into his.

"Never, never go 'way?"

"Never!" he promised with determination that roughly overbore the vague protests that surged up.

"You hate her?" The flickering of lingering suspicions touched that question with fire.

"Uala," he said a little wearily, yet patiently, "I have always hated her. She killed my brother. She and her brother, or cousin—that man I shot—I mean the one Banoo clubbed. I came from away off to find them and——"

He stopped.

"I thought she love you!" Uala cried in surprize.

"No." Then: "She never loved any one. I doubt if she did."

"You no lie?"

The natives use the word "lie" quite frankly. They have no euphemism for it.

"No. I shall never lie to you."

"Why you no kill her then quick?"

And there are people who say that the natives are incapable of logic.

"In my country men never kill a woman. That is, the kind of men that I admire."

This was much too ethical, one might well say too mystical, for Uala.

"You no kill me if I love Banoo?" she asked in a sort of wondering breathlessness.

"No," Gilbert Lang answered with a trace of a smile.

"You no love me!" she cried angrily.

"Uala!"

"You no love me!"

"I do. Always. I am going to stay with you—never leave you. We'll have a hut and—" and what could he add?

His tongue stopped short of the words "books," for what were books to her? What of reading under the shade of a palm, of reading verse aloud? And other things of delight to him, what of them? Music, pictures, the quick conversation of well-read men? At the very threshold of the idyllic hut he was checked by the consciousness that they had nothing in common. But resolutely he added:

"And fish and boat together. Splash in the surf. Oh, we'll have a beautiful time!"

"Me love you!" she answered, "Oh—" and a score of burning words in her birthright tongue swarmed up to him while she sweetly pressed his hand against her face.

THERE was no sadness in her joy, but the great weight of renunciation was on him, though he tried to throw it off and smiled, answered her questions as she wished to have them answered, even agreeing, though with no earnestness, that it would be perilous for her to love any one other than himself. She was a daughter of the wind and waves, of Nature, and he was bone and flesh of that most unnatural fabric which men have woven for themselves through the thousands of years, Civilization.

There is scarcely an elemental difference between savagery and civilization, but it is rarely in life that the elemental makes decisions, so hedged about is every one by tastes, desires, senses of beauty and enjoyment and other superficialities—

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superficialities, that is, in the cosmic scale —and, though it might have been, and it was, an elemental attraction that first brought Gilbert Lang's and Uala's lips together—as it often welds patrician and plebeian, the man of culture to the dazzling *demi mondaine*—yet it was with hungering regret that Gilbert Lang put behind him the things that had been cherished in the past.

He put them behind him, not for this woman—she was scarcely more than the symbol—but because grown reckless, hopeless, oppressed by that suicidal question of "What's the use of it all, anyway?" and feeling not only distressed but conscience-banned from the society he valued in the other, the Northern, world, he had decided, as untold numbers in those seas have decided, to cut himself adrift to be carried before the winds and storms, the dangers and passions, that play across that remote quarter of the earth.

In biographies all things are forgiven "Love," and, if it could be said in so many italicized words that Gilbert Lang loved Uala and because of that love sacrificed all else, his motive would be clear and convincing. But to repeat, she was more the symbol than the passion: women often are. They do not know it; they would resent it. But they are; both those who pull men up and pull them down. Not that strong affection is always or rarely absent; not that often passion of itself is not the propulsive force, but the other is true, too.

Presently the attention of Gilbert Lang and Uala was attracted by a rise in the pitch of the chatter of the natives in the waist and a few calls and answers across the ship, while everybody was rushing to the side. The prisoners and wounded and dead were being brought to the edge of the beach. The Gopassans had no boats, and whatever reinforcements had arrived during the day had not been able to bring their canoes into the channel, though it might have been possible to carry a few of the lighter along the trail.

Williams came on to the poop and peered for some time through the glass. He again appeared that man that Gilbert Lang knew best: tense, calm, decisive, and the boy stared at him rather than at the spectacle on shore. Gilbert Lang understood him better now; understood him better and, though not completely, he was more tolerant of what he did not understand. If tragedies make enemies, they, too, often smelt men into friendships.

When satisfied, Williams quickly gave orders.

The brass cannon, loaded with odds and ends of iron, heavily charged with powder, was run to the starboard, and Gilbert Lang, with a match-box in his hand, was placed beside it. His instructions were to sweep the shore at the first sign of treachery.

Three boats—those of the *Bebe* had been appropriated by Williams—one of them empty, and with about a dozen men in each of the others, and Williams at the bow of the first, made for shore.

It was late in the afternoon and very quiet. The sky had broken up into drifting cloud-banks, some with mass on mass of rolling white that caught the glare of the hidden sun, others gray and reaching toward the sky-line with deepening hues until black as the face of night. Below in the clear, coral-laced water the rainbow colors burned with the steady brilliancy of flames, and bright, fairylike fish, scaled and hued with the glowing symmetry of the Master Artist, floated and flashed in and out of their watery grottoes, their labyrinthine castles wrought in the intricate designs of sprayed and massed coral.

On shore the nearer foliage revealed a dull green, illuminated here and there by spots of the foamy blossoms, but banked against the rising hills the green became dark and more dark until with some chromatic magic it merged into the purple mists of the distant mountains. The beach was edged with rocks, grotesque and rough-lined, and rocks thrust their ungainly heads above the water like monsters spying out the world, or else long-ribbed and jagged like other monsters asleep with armored backs thrust carelessly into view.

The narrow strip of sand that made the beach, white and glaring on hot days, was now dully gray with moisture, and on it stood the black shapes and groups of the Gopassans, who, having borne the dead and wounded to the water, drew back to watch and wait. In the foreground, alone, was Jackson.

The boats skilfully picked their way through the rocks, and, coming near the beach, the natives leaped out and ran them up on to the sand, almost clear of the water.

Williams sprang out and strode ashore,

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not looking behind him to see how well the natives did their work, not glancing toward the Gopassans, armed and swelled to more formidable numbers by the volunteers that had flocked from neighboring villages. He ignored Jackson, who came toward him —not seeming to ignore him deliberately but through a more intense interest in the pathetic row of bodies dumped on the sand.

One of the Samoans, Uala's uncle, called Tom because he had sailed with a whaler and white men gave him the name, bounded forward in frantic joy. He chattered and leaped exultantly, answered Williams' whip-cracker questions and sprang on to greet his friends nearer the boats. Williams walked along, speaking to the wounded, of whom there were a half dozen that had been left in the village by the morning raid, stooping to examine first this and that injury; then he scanned the faces of the dead.

His own face was hard as if granite-hewn.

"When'll you send them people 'shore?" asked Jackson, his loud, hoarse voice breaking discordantly on the solemn scene.

Williams wheeled as if he had been touched by a spring-releasing finger. His eyes swept Jackson from head to foot as if he had never seen the man before.

"W. W. says he wants them women put ashore right away—'fore you take off these hunks o' meat."

A gesture swept at the little group of stiff, silent men: dead.

Something like a seismical quiver ran down Williams' strained, hard-set body.

"Now, don't get wild, don't get wild," Jackson said quickly, taking a step backward. "You know I'm all right, Williams. I tipped you off t' look out that time. An' I'm tippin' you off right now that W. W.'s got you covered with ever' rifle on the island from the bush there, an' these niggers are just achin' to cut you up."

Williams was, as usual at such times, silent.

"W. W. 's ready t' play fair. He sure is. But you don't put nothin' over him. You get these things on board, an' you'll tell him t' go straight to ——. An' he guesses if he gets you, Williams, it won't be nothin' much to tend to the rest o' your crowd. I'm givin' it to you straight."

THEN—the blurr of a body coming through space, the sudden, overpowering clench of steel-tempered fingers at a bushy throat, the gleam of a knife, point down at a broad, heavy face—before Jackson could cry out or move, Williams was saying tensely, fiercely, but low-voiced:

"If they hit me, it will be 'cause bullets come through your body. You keep between me and the bush. One move aside and you will be a hunk o' meat, too!"

The Gopasssans had seen Williams leap; so had the watchers from the bush. Voices called apprehensively, and there was a nervous, restless stir among the cannibals.

"Tell them," said Williams, "it is all right as long as they keep quiet—and at a distance."

And Jackson, roaring as if to be clearly heard on the moon, interpreted his instruction as:

"For God's sake, don't shoot. Stay where you are. It's all right. Hear me? All right. Ever' thing's all right. W. W.? Hear me? Don't do anything. For God's sake, don't!"

And those in the distance wondered but heeded the words of Jackson.

Williams told Chief Nauma to count up and identify the bodies and have them borne into the boats, and that, if so much as one were missing, there would be further reckoning.

And, as the bodies were carried down hurriedly to the boats by the tender hands of friends, most of whom were relatives, and the wounded were helped along, the big barrel body of the frightened Jackson stood like a buttress between Williams and the riflemen hidden in the bush.

When the grim and precious cargo had been taken, Williams told the boats to shove off—without him. And they did.

He and Jackson stood alone at the water's edge, and ten-score pairs of wondering eyes looked and wondered. They stood there until the boats had reached the *Mary;* then Williams said:

"Jackson, you might be a man if the devil hadn't taken an option on you through Willerby. Now go back to him, tell him that I'll send those people on shore, but I'll burn the *Bebe* to the water—and you know how he loves to lose ships—if he makes one move against me."

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Williams turned away, as if contemptuous of anything Jackson might do behind his back, and started for the water.

"Say, Williams," Jackson called low-voiced, "wait a minute."

Williams paused, half turned but did not look up.

"Will you give me a place on your schooner? I'll take a chance with you. You're goin' out tonight, ain't you?"

"No," said Williams, answering both questions with one word, and, leaping into the water, he struck out for the *Mary*.

Jackson cursed him loud and hard, mentioning that the fool would be hanged from yardarm and that he hoped to see it done; that the Dutch gunboat was coming and if Williams didn't get out that night he wouldn't get out at all. Jackson would have liked to go because his relations with Willerby were exceedingly unpleasant and becoming more so.

The Gopassans came swarming to the water's edge. They were excited and gesticulated and pranced threateningly. Chief Ghorki accused Jackson of having played the natives false because they had been told the prisoners would be returned before the bodies were removed. Willerby came closer—just out of rifle-shot from the ship—and told Jackson the same thing.

Williams had sent the boats to the ship first and had waited with Jackson literally as his bodyguard so that, if the cannibals and Willerby did open fire, the others would be out of range; while, when he was swimming back alone, he would be under cover of the schooner's rifles. If the cannon had been fired, or rifles either, while he and his natives were on the beach, there would have been about as much chance of their being hit as that the Gopassans would have suffered.

Perhaps Willerby was beginning to understand why and how this man Williams had most incomprehensibly baffled and foiled the various efforts to catch him. At least it was becoming apparent to Gilbert Lang, who, through the glasses that had been left with him, had seen all that happened and surmised exactly what Williams had been about.

When Williams, dripping and panting, came on deck, the boy enthusiastically praised him to his face.

"Why, I could actually see how frightened that big Jackson was—and you not half his size!"

Williams smiled, pleased, gratified—not by the boy's praise so much as by his enthusiasm and the friendliness of it—and his hand rested lightly, affectionately, on the other's arm.

"Oh I would give anything to be as quick and strong as you!"

Williams made a little, deprecating but pleased gesture.

"I think you are wonderful! And—I don't know how to say it—but I want to stay with you—sail with you—always. Be like you."

It was awkwardly put, with the frankness and awkwardness of youth, and Gilbert Lang continued, embarrassed but determined:

"I want to marry Uala—and stay here—in the South Seas. Follow your fortunes, you know. I was very—you know—disagreeable at first. I didn't understand. I want to be—it's hard to put it just like I mean—a friend, a real one. One that sticks. I'll be a pirate—anything. Nigger-lover, too. I am one. I shall marry Uala. That will be all right, won't it? If I really marry her and stay?"

Williams' hand slipped up to the boy's shoulder and rested for a moment, and his voice was almost unbelievably gentle as he said:

"There's much to attend to now. We'll have a long talk one of these days. That German should be here tonight or by morning at least. And, if we get away, we'll have peace for a while and time to talk about things—the future and all."

And between them came silence as each looked into the face of the other. Gilbert Lang a little surprized and vaguely disturbed that something seemed to be wrong, but Williams gave no word or sign—simply looked for a moment at the boy with an expression peculiarly strange, yet friendly, even tender.

Then Williams said:

"I must get these people ashore before dark. We will leave here tomorrow—or the next day."

He went away, giving instructions here and there to have the women and Baraka taken to the beach, but he himself became at once busy with dressing the injuries of those that had come back alive.

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ABOUT the deck the women were preparing the dead bodies for burial, washing and rubbing them with oil, and working in the rhythm of low, dolorous chants. The sail-room and stores of the *Bebe* had been plundered, and some of the men were cutting canvas and bringing odds of iron for the burial-shrouds.

Other men were busily working under the direction of Chief Nauma about the ship, working with that nervous bustle that is usual when getting ready to put to sea: masts were being greased, tackles tested and changed, and strong hawsers coiled on the forecastle near the capstan, and the heaviest block bent on to the boom, while the kedge-anchors were brought out.

Gilbert Lang watched. The scene, even with its divers activity, seemed harmonious. As the poem has it, "Men must work, and women must weep"—so runs this world away. And all the while the children played carelessly about the deck. Now one tot would crowd its curious way past a mother's elbow and stand for a second in hushed, awed silence before the stark, stiff body, then dash hastily out again and take up a mad chase around the mast to catch a playmate.

The children shouted and romped and were ignored. An impersonal cuff sometimes sent one sprawling from the way of a busy sailor, and the child would get up, for a moment rub the spot that had come in contact with the deck and go on as if nothing had happened.

Gilbert Lang saw Baraka being brought across the deck, and after him the two women. The boat was alongside. They were just climbing down into it when he shouted for them to wait. He wondered why Lania, too, had not been brought. The answer from Chief Nauma was that he did not know she was supposed to go. Williams had said nothing.

Gilbert Lang went to Williams, who was before a prostrate, writhing body and, while a man at each arm and leg held the screaming man motionless, was probing into a spear-wound, painfully swabbing it out with iodine. At first glance it looked like deliberate cruelty.

"To be kind," said Williams, glancing up and catching the expression in Gilbert Lang's eyes, "one must often be cruel."

It was a strange thing for him to say, and he seemed speaking more for something else, something that was to come in the future, than for that little incident in surgery.

Gilbert Lang told why he had come, and Williams said that as soon as he had dressed the wound they would go to the cabin. He had not specially told Nauma to have her sent with the others, and perhaps it would be best to see her before she went.

Williams went to the cabin and the boy with him. A knock brought no answer. Williams opened it.

Lania was sitting on the floor. She had worked her hands loose, and the bandages, not entirely removed, dripped from her fingers. She had torn off the dressing on her face, and she sat with the broken mirror, peering into it with the intentness of a crystal-gazer scanning the things that are to be. Her absorption was so great that she did not hear the knock, did not notice the two men who stood at the open door.

Her disfigurement was real. She could not believe it: but the glass bore steady witness. The nightmare did not pass, and like one stupefied she stared at the deep red streak—the red line drawn in the flesh of her cheek that divided her past and her future.

"The boat," said Williams distinctly, impersonally, with a chilled low tone that seemed shockingly harsh to Gilbert Lang, who sorely sympathized with Lania, "the boat," he said, "is ready to take you ashore."

She looked up dully. The men might have been strangers to her from all that appeared in her eyes.

"What boat?"

"To take you over to Willerby."

She laughed shortly, sardonically, asking:

"With this face? Willerby? He would tear these out of my ears—" she touched the black ear-rings—"and tell me to get from his sight. No, I don't go near W. W."

"Yes, you are going," said Williams.

The flood-gates of Lania's wrath broke; words rushed in a torrent from her lips. She arose to her feet, a maniacal fire in her eyes, her fists clenched and upraised as if to strike Williams down, and she said things that Gilbert Lang had never heard before come from a woman's lips. She said that they were too cowardly to murder her; that they had set the native

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woman to disfigure her and now they wanted to send her to Willerby in the hope that he would kill her.

She would not go! Willerby was as all other men: he liked women only when they were pretty. They could do what they liked with her, but she would not go! And did they wish her to be ugly? She would be. She was not afraid!

And with claw-like finger-nails she raked the other cheek so that three long, red scratches appeared, and shriekingly she demanded to know if they were now satisfied!

"Mad," said Williams under his breath.

"Oh God, I can't stand this!" Gilbert Lang muttered, turning his head away and putting his hand to his eyes.

"See! You have left some of my hair long!" And she tore a handful out by the roots and swept the long strand into Williams' face.

"Let us leave her alone," said Williams, taking the boy by the arm and leading him from the cabin, and after them came the shrill, crazed voice of the woman.

It was the first time in many, many years that any one had successfully refused to do what Williams in earnest had said should be done.

He sent the others ashore, telling the two women to say what they liked to Willerby by way of explanation, but the truth was that a native girl had slashed her and that Lania, ashamed and out of her head at the loss of her beauty, refused to go.

No, they could not see her.

And they went unbelievingly.

XIII

THE night came on, black and starless with gusts of rain. Williams, as usual, had all lights put out and set his sentries early to peer into the darkness. The murmur of voices rose from small groups talking late, and the occasional *flap-flap* of bare feet fell on the deck. Gradually sleep and quietude brought on silence, silence except for the lapping of the rising tide and the spats of falling rain.

Midnight wore away, and Williams aroused himself from his blankets where he had lain with eyes opened and went on deck. For a long time he sat in the rain, letting it strike his bare body with cool, soothing caresses.

He was unusually restless even for him, who could scarcely remember an hour of untroubled relaxation. Go where he would and do what he might, he could not escape himself. He had some regrets and many things to remember that weighed down on his mind. And now was added the tragedy of Lania. Life for him had been spoiled as he emerged from childhood. He seldom reviewed all that. He did not tonight.

His thoughts were chiefly of Gilbert Lang. He wanted the boy for a friend, for a companion, as he had wanted but few things in the world. All of the hungriness, concealed under bitterness, under a kind of savagery, for the friendly companionship of one of his own race was centered on that boy, and yet . . . .

Williams suddenly realized that, though he had been sitting there for hours, there had been no change of sentries.

That was one of the undisciplinable characteristics of the natives: they would sleep on watch. Excepting Banoo, none of them was entirely dependable, for, though brave enough, they could not see the use of looking and listening when there seemed to be nothing to look and listen for.

Williams was tempted to throw one of the sleeping forms overboard and let him awaken in the water as a lesson on the value of keeping watchful. But he did not. He did not awaken any of them. He went below, buckled on two revolvers—well protected from the rain by flap-holsters of thick, oiled canvas—returned to the galley, drank a cup of cold, strong coffee and climbed to the top of the deck-house.

There was much to think of. His own was a hard-spent, reckless life that had turned from a promising career of an intellectual character into outlawry.

Was that a voice that seem to reach him like an echo-blown shout?

He listened intently for a time, then resumed his thought. It seemed that always every man and every woman he trusted had been faithless. There had been only one answer: trust none. Gilbert Lang was different. The boy was born of stock in which honor was ingrained. He was intelligent, refined. That was the worst of it.

Could that be wind and rain? It was uncannily like the stir and murmur of men in the distance.

And women: he had always been unfortunate with them, perhaps because he

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loved them too well. It is not wise to love a woman until by the mere folding of her fingers she can stretch the heart-strings to the snapping-point.

That splash? A fish leaping? A wave caught in some combination of tide-rip and slapping a rock? No doubt the three men on watch on the *Bebe* were also asleep. Well, let them sleep. If they awakened in time to strike a match, all that he wanted done would be done.

Many men had married natives and settled down to the free life of those seas, and Gilbert Lang might as well do it as they. What difference did it really make where a life was spent or how? After one has gone through the coffin portal that leads to the grave, then the past means nothing. And yet, was it so?

Could that be the tide crawling in among the rocks and lapping so continuously, so distinctly? No. It could not be. There was something grating against the ship. A boat! The schooner was being attacked; a horde had slipped through the water!

Williams' voice split the night with a rousing cry, and he was answered by ten-score throats from the water's level. The sleeping guards roused up and fired their guns aimlessly. It was too dark to see, anyway.

Out of the companionways the schooner's crew tumbled. Up over the side the cannibals scrambled. Numbers were with them, and they had hoped for the surprize.

Willerby had learned a lesson in tactics from Williams. And an hour before dawn, having carried a few boats all the way from the village harbor and letting the other amphibian natives swim, he had headed the attack. He had divided his party, part of it to cut off the *Bebe* and the most to massacre those on the *Mary*.

Williams cried his commands into the impenetrable night.

"To the poop and deck-house. Shoot low. Hold the poop! Rake the freeboard and rails! Shoot low!"

Friend fought friend; cannibals struck cannibals. Only a few among them, such as came with Willerby, had rifles. But with tomahawks and clubs they could do deadly work. And over the sides they came.

Williams did not shoot. He stood poised, a revolver in one hand, his knife in the other, and called the heartening, rallying cries, while again and again he turned his head over his shoulder in the direction of the *Bebe*. He was waiting for light.

And gradually light came. His men on the *Bebe* may have been asleep—no doubt were—but they had not been caught so. A glow began first to show through the *Bebe* ports; then points of flame came through the hatches. The guards, knowing what they were supposed to do in case of alarm, and having all arrangements prepared to do it promptly and having spilled oil and powder, fired it, then leaped overboard. They struck for the island shore, to sit and watch and wait.

The flames grew, leaped high, roared and cast their glare into the sky, and in the light of the burning *Bebe* the men on board the *Mary* fought.

Jackson and Willerby and the white men were on the deck in the confused mass of cannibals. The thunderous voice of Jackson rang the boarder's cry, and Willerby pressed forward. Many of Williams' crew were caught and butchered; most gained the poop, some the deck-house; a few went into the rigging. Screams and howls, the thud of blows, the bitter crack of rifles, and through it all the shapes, like thickened solid shadows, swarming and leaping. Williams shot, again, again, again, again, again! And a man fell at each report.

He fired at those who had rifles among the boarders, and, the revolver being empty, he hurled it at the nearest cannibal head. A half dozen Tongans were on the deck-house with him. Three fired independently, and three loaded for him. He fired with incredible rapidity and with terrifying accuracy. The light from the burning ship was bright, not steady, but Williams seemed to shoot with instinctive precision.

Jackson, who had been urging a charge on the poop, pressed back and opened fire on the deck-house with a revolver. Williams got a full view of his bearded face; a second's longer, steadying aim, and Jackson went down—dead.

THE fighting was fierce. It could not last long. The cannibals, caught between two fires and with only manual weapons, were more confused than aided by numbers, and over the side they leaped in panicky dozens.

Williams searched among the crowd for Willerby. He was almost sure that Willerby was on deck, but he could not see him.

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His voice had been heard at first in the general mêlée before the *Bebe* became a torch, but afterward Williams did not see or hear him: and all the while Williams fired implacably at wherever a white man appeared.

The cannibals—natives in general are seldom able to fight desperately for long if there is open an avenue of escape—were taking to the water. The wounded were dragging themselves overboard, too.

Williams sprang from the deck-house, and with him came the Tongans. They fired pointblank and struck at an elbow's length. Williams, as always in a fight, was berserker: he ripped and slashed with irresistible fury, hurling himself literally against whatever enemy was nearest. And, finding the deck cleared of cannibals, he leaned over the side, drew his second revolver and shot at the black spots—the heads of swimmers.

The ship was a shambles. The loss on its side had not been light; the loss on the side of the greater numbers had been heavy.

Gilbert Lang came down off the poop, and he was a strange sight for any one who remembered the delicate-featured, precise-mannered boy of a few weeks before. No one around him did remember: all were too busy with their wounded and dead for the contemplation of contrasts. Gilbert Lang was naked from the waist up, and blood, some of it his own, covered his chest. His face was grimy; his eyes narrowed and hard, and he walked, strode, with the firm step and swing of a fighting man—of the fighting man who has forgotten all about his own body, his own life and death, because his will and brain have been fused toward but one end: win!

In the glare of the burning *Bebe* the natives worked, not unlike the shadow-shapes that toil in the glow of hell-fire, for the light they worked in was heaven-scaling, diffusing the night, but not sharp and clear, leaving objects faintly indistinct like the blurred outlines of a poor focus.

"Willerby's somewhere," said Gilbert Lang to Williams. "I hit him across the face with a rifle when he jumped up the ladder there—" and an arm swept backward toward the poop. "I think it must've stunned him. I looked but didn't see him again."

The deck was crowded. The women that had shrieked between decks came out crying, some with exultation, some with exultation checked by stooping low over a prostrate, hacked body. The men, those unwounded and less wounded, swarmed hither and thither. It was cruel, but they were men who had fought for their lives and ship against odds: they flung the enemy overboard, and the wounded went over dead. Williams was too busy with his own to notice or, if he did notice, to care.

Then there leaped from silence, right up into the bowl of heaven, overflowing it with reverberations, the roar of a cannon: the German gunboat had arrived and been guided to within some short distance of the island that sheltered the *Mary* by the burning of the *Bebe*. The gun was fired as a signal to announce its presence.

Williams stood erect for a moment while a dying man over whom he had been bending groaned weakly, and Williams stood looking into space and listening.

"Now we are in for it!" said Gilbert Lang, not weakly, not fearfully, not even greatly concerned—simply stating a fact.

"Yes," said Williams, with something of the relief of one who speaks to an equal. "We are. Listen. When I came into this channel I expected the German to catch me here, and I very carefully made some calculations. They say I wrecked one German—as if I could help it because their skipper was a poor navigator. The Germans have put a big price on my head. That's why I didn't run. If my calculations weren't right, we'll both swing for it."

"No," said Gilbert Lang with sudden fury, "we'll make them kill us—fighting—rifles against cannon!"

God quarries the ore that he makes men out of from many mines, and to the clay admixture He put a sparkle of gold, some tin, brass and iron, and it is seldom that men know of what they are made. Feet of clay are as good for city pavements as feet of bronze, but those who go into the far places have the metal within them smelted and tempered, and, if it be merely clay and brass, they are quickly broken and discarded. But Gilbert Lang rang true steel: the gilt on him was scratched and scorched away.

True, he had become nearer the savage, but, too, nearer the breed that men have praised in their sagas. Let civilization, culture, ethics work as they will; still there is something indestructible, intangible, within mankind that is answered only by the voices out of epics, out of the old pages of adventure, out of the press paragraphs,

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that tell of how men in just fights killed other men and how they faced their own deaths, unafraid. Those are the ones God made of iron ore, and the souls of the rest of us turn toward them with the eternal eagerness of the compass needle for the North Star.

Williams broke his staring silence, a silence in which his eyes glowed like points of fire, and said tensely, mystifyingly, but more as if speaking to himself than to the boy——

"It may be too late now—too late, maybe."

Gilbert Lang thought he was speaking of the German and escape, but it was something far removed from that of which Williams was thinking.

He turned away, glanced at the dawn that flashed dully in the cloud-banked sky; then with a sigh he again stooped to the body at his feet.

The Samoan warrior was dead.

Williams hurriedly stepped to the next body. Breath was in it; the eyes opened, and Banoo looked up at him. Williams gasped. Banoo smiled, murmured weakly.

What? Should he have lain on blankets between decks when enemies swarmed on his ship? What were wounds to a man who could move? And what were other wounds, such as he had now, but the portals through which his soul might slip to chieftain fathers, who, he hoped, would not be ashamed to welcome him!

And as Williams kneeled motionless beside the body, peering down with the sadness of great loss upon him, peering down at the face whereon a smile lingered and stayed, Banoo died.

XIV

THEY found Willerby abaft the main hatch, and with him they found Lania DuBeque. She had come upon him fumbling about on his knees and one hand. The other he held tightly pressed to his face.

Continually he mumbled:

"My God, how black it is! How black it is!"

He was blind.

"W. W.!" she had cried.

"Lania!" and his hand fluttered helplessly in the direction of her voice.

"You are hurt!" she had exclaimed, unsuspected fountains of sympathy bubbling up in her heart, at the same time drawing back and shielding her marred cheek.

"I can't see!" He spoke in the quiet awed voice that ever attends the tragedy of blindness.

They were two changed people. Winston Willerby, the blustering, the domineering, was shut in the utter darkness, helpless as a child and like a child awed by the miserable solemnity of blackness impenetrable. Lania, the magic of her beauty broken as one might break a wizard's crystal, was no longer conscious of pride.

"Am I a prisoner?" he asked.

"Yes, W. W. Your men ran like rats. I don't think Williams knows you're here."

"Find me a gun, Lania. Find me a gun and get my back to a bulkhead. God, how black it is! Like the sun had gone out. Find me a gun; that's a good girl."

"Hush, W. W.!" And she took hold of his arm, and his hands groped to her. "Don't talk that way!"

"Why didn't you come back, Lania? If you had come back, I wouldn't have attacked. Jackson—I wonder if that coward ran—I hope they killed him if he did—Jackson said Williams was goin' to carry you off."

"No, no," he said hastily. "He doesn't want me."

"You don't love him?" He asked it with the quick suspicion of the blind.

"I never loved any one but you, W. W."

She said it tenderly, feelingly, and raised her lips to his face, thankful that he could not see.

"I was good to you, Lania. I was good to you. God, how black it is! Poor Paul, they got him. What do you think they'll do with me, Lania? It's awful—not to see. It's daylight, isn't it?"

"They won't do anything," she said, reassuring him with a confidence that she was far from feeling. And added savagely, meaningly, "If they do, I'll kill them!"

His fingers fumbled at her face. Gently she guided his hand to the cheek that was not cut—only scratched. His fingers were not yet the sensitive antennæ of the blind.

"I can't see, Lania! I can't see! If I could only see!"

"I'll never leave you! You can have my eyes!" she said quickly.

"I heard a cannon—was that the *Prinz*, Lania? It will catch him. They will hang

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him. Oh God, give me eyes just to see him hanged! Then strike me blind again! He must be——"

"Hush! Hush! If he was to hear!"

"Maybe it will come back. Blindness don't always last. It was a sidelong sweep of a rifle butt—right across the eyes. I can't see a thing!" and Willerby cursed his misfortune.

Williams and Gilbert Lang stood before them. What Williams may have expected to say when some of his natives told him where Willerby was, may not be known. He did not say it. At a glance he saw Willerby was blind, and he made a gesture of silence toward Lania, whose tension of body and parted mouth indicated that she was about to speak excitedly.

Willerby sensed through the abrupt silence that something was wrong.

"Lania, where are you? Don't leave me. You won't leave? What is it? Why are you so quiet? Oh God!" and he rubbed his hand over his face as if to pull away a blindfold.

"Here, W. W. I won't leave you. Never!"

"Willerby," said Williams, "I don't suppose——"

"It's him!" Willerby exclaimed. "Lania, why didn't you tell me? I am helpless. Do what you like!"

"Don't suppose that you would let me examine your injury. I used to be something of a surgeon——"

"Then you are Clive Stanley!" Lania shrieked.

"Clive Stanley? Lania, who's he? Isn't that Williams—I thought it was Williams."

"He's Clive Stanley, too. A man—man—that once—a man that once hated me!" She had hesitated precariously over the choice of "hate" and "love."

"Something of a surgeon," Williams repeated, going on as if he had not heard the interruption, "and I might be able to tell the extent of the injury."

"You would blind me! No, don't touch me!" W. W. exclaimed in angry suspicion.

"Yes, I need to take that advantage of you when I could have you bound and gouge your eyes at my leisure."

The savage sarcasm slipped into Willerby's ears as a threat. He knew the cruelty to which some men would go.

"You wouldn't do that! You wouldn't!" he said, visibly affected but not cowardly—far from cowardly, for in the next instant with the majesty of helplessness he dropped his hands determinedly to his side and said loudly: "Go on! Gouge them out, you —— cannibal! Do what you like."

Willerby was no coward. In his younger days he had been a fighter, and, though luxury and power had expanded his rough nature into coarseness, yet, when stripped to helplessness, like many kings of history who have been shameful in offices, the man took on a certain dignity, majesty, in which the trappings of wealth and a retinue of flatterers could never invest him.

"Take him to my cabin," Williams said to Lania. "Tie a bandage around his eyes. Keep the light out. Understand? Don't let the light get to his eyes, and he may save them."

And Williams walked abruptly away.

"I'll help you," said Gilbert Lang.

Lania took one arm and the boy the other, and they led Willerby down the ladder and into the cabin.

Gilbert Lang brought from his own trunk a dark shirt, tore off the sleeve and started to tie it around Willerby's eyes, but he protested. None but Lania could do it. She tied it, and the boy went out.

"Who is Clive Stanley?" W. W. asked, not forgetting in his own anguish and pain that name.

"He—he," Lania hesitated desperately, then decided, "he was a man that murdered the husband of a friend of mine. I was responsible for his being caught. He knows it. They even hanged him, W. W.—but he is the devil. He can't be killed!"

"The *Prinz* is here—he can't escape. Oh God, why can't I see? Lania, you won't leave me, will you? We'll go to London and get the best surgeon. He ought to be able to help me. Don't you think he could help me?"

"Yes, W. W.," she answered with fear on her face that belied the encouragement of her words, and unconsciously her fingers touched the painful gash in her cheek.

The sun was up and bright, bright with intensity of a brief interval from the cloud-prisoning sky.

"Why did he kill him—the husband?"

"He loved the wife—my friend. She hated him. Loved her husband, was devoted. That's why." Then changing the subject: "It's been night, W. W. Maybe your eyes weren't hurt so much. I could scarcely see, either. Here, here is the light

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through the port. Stand here, W. W. Let me take off the bandage. Stand here. That's it. Look this way—there—can you see anything now?"

Anxiously she asked it, turning his sightless face blindingly into the glare that streamed through the port.

By main force of thumb and finger he pried the unyielding lids open, lids that were swollen and sore and sensitively, instinctively, closed themselves to the light.

"It's warm. But I can't see. I am blind! I am blind!" he said piteously, dashed from his last hope.

"Try longer! Don't give up. It may come. The light may break through."

The pain was agonizing, but, trusting her, desperate for hope, he stood to the port.

Again and again he turned away, and she petted him, caressed him tenderly and again and again urged him to try if the fierce stream of light would not pierce the black abyss between his brain and the retina. The sun passed behind clouds, emerged, was again concealed, again burned its way through.

IN AN hour many things had happened on and around the schooner, and the developments were such that Williams suddenly appeared at the cabin door. He saw Willerby staring into the light, while Lania's hands gently guided his face so that the fierce beams would smite the eyes.

"You fiend!" said Williams, with such long-drawn fury on the word that Lania's flesh was scaled with chills. "Blind men—now!" he added, with unerring significance; with such significance that Lania's hand unconsciously flew up in a futile effort to shield the gashed cheek from view.

Willerby started to speak, but Lania's words sprang first, loud and clear, and her brain, quickened by the danger, served her well:

"I know, Clive Stanley, that you would do anything to injure me! I have told W. W. all. I am never going to leave him. Never! And please, please, haven't you hurt us enough? He is blind, and I—I—I am going to stay with him and take care of him. He will have no true friends now but me. People will cheat him and neglect him. Oh, please let us alone to get what happiness we can out of our misery! I am not a fiend. I never was a fiend! Because I sometimes did what men wanted me to do, they call me a fiend. You, Clive Stanley—you know it! I have done wrong, yes——

"W. W., I have been wicked—evil if you wish—but I do love you. I will stay with you and take care of you. I have no one in the world but you!

"'Blind men—now,' you say," she hissed screamingly at Williams. "Yes, yes, yes! You know why.

"W. W., I am hideous, ugly. This man turned a native girl loose on me with a knife, and my face is all cut to pieces. If you saw me, you would loathe me. You can't imagine what I look like; so you must still remember me as I looked when we were happy together. I want to go with you. I want to take care of you. And we will go to London, and, if they give you back your eyes, then you can cast me out! I won't complain. But I know you will! I know you will! It's only the face that men look at. Who ever cared what my heart wanted? What I yearned for? What good was in me? None of them—never! Never!"

She spoke with furious and convincing sincerity, and when she stopped there was silence for the ticking of many seconds; then Williams—low-voiced but answering—said just two words, two that did not even distinctly reach Willerby's ears. He said—

"Frank Lang!"

And Lania crumpled beneath the inrush of memories and dropped to the floor, weeping.

"Willerby," Williams went on, "the *Prinz* is at the channel's mouth. She's sent a boat in to tell me I am captured. I've got that boat lying-to under cover of your old brass cannon. By the way, I understand the natives have killed off all your men on shore—so perhaps it's a good thing you didn't escape with the others. Now you'll probably get better attention on the *Prinz* than here—but you'll get to London quicker by staying on my schooner. You have your choice."

"Let us go to the *Prinz!*"

"You want that fiend to go with you—after what she has done?"

"Williams, if I had my eyes, I'd kill you for that! She is not a fiend. You're the fiend, Hurricane Williams or Clive Stanley or whoever you are. You've abused her and mutilated her and—and—oh God, I wish I could see!"

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"You don't wish it any more than I do," said Williams in a tone that made even Willerby in his anger suddenly grow cold, and oddly enough he remembered at that instant how Williams had choked him and battered him. "I have no regard or sympathy for you, Winston Willerby. But you are a blind man, and I would be as dirty a dog as you were when you threw that boy in irons, as when you fed the cannibals whisky to get them to butcher me—I would be as dirty a dog as that, Willerby, if I abused you now. So on to the *Prinz* you go. Both of you. Stand up—" to Lania—"nobody's going to carry you!"

They went on deck, Willerby cursing in his anger and helpless—and Lania, sorrowful of face, helped him. She cautioned him over and over to say less bitter things, or nothing at all, until they were out of Williams' hands. Gilbert Lang heard her. So did Williams. Willerby seemed to be the only one who did not, for he continued heedless as ever.

About fifty yards away and near the smoking hull of the *Bebe*, a cutter from off the gunboat, with two officers and a number of men under arms, uneasily held herself head-on to the schooner while the brass cannon, loaded with shrapnel, gaped down, making officers and men feel very uncomfortable. There were bodies lodged against the rocks and others visible in the shallow water, as well as the burned *Bebe*, to inspire them with considerable fear. The officers talked loudly, nervously, to each other, saying what was to be done with this outlaw when they got him and in the excitable German way promising to make him sorely regret the insolence.

With a refinement of insolence that was not lost on them, Williams instructed one of the natives to call them alongside. The officers knew well enough what was wanted, but that they should be ordered about by the gestures of a naked savage was unbearable. They pretended not to understand.

Without a word, Williams stepped to the cannon and struck a match. He did not even look toward the cutter, though hasty shouts and a splashing of oars desperately tried to attract his attention as the boat came on.

He threw the match overboard, still disdaining to look in the direction of the officers in the Kaiser's uniform. It was a native who indicated that they should come to the sea-ladder, and natives and Gilbert Lang helped Willerby and Lania down.

"Now," said Williams, speaking in German—very good German, too—as he strode to the side and glared down, "go back to your ship and tell your captain I picked this spot out because there isn't a position he can take to use me as a target, and, if he attempts to come in, he will go on the rocks. Shove off!"

The boat shoved off in haste, and the crew of the schooner manned the rails to watch it go. Even Williams, silent, taciturn, stood a long time staring after it; then he ran an American flag to the gaff.

And Chief Nauma and the two natives with him, lurking out of sight amid the overhanging rocks of the island, lurking there and watching, saw the flag and understood. They were to remain as long as the flag stayed up—for days if need be, though Williams thought the setting sun would find them back on the schooner.

"A strange thing—this world," said Gilbert Lang to Williams, as the boy watched the cutter disappear behind a buttressing rock. "She lost her beauty just when he lost his eyes."

"And she will be loyal to him," said Williams, "till she learns how to keep some fool man from seeing more than her profile!"

But Gilbert Lang shook his head.

XV

IT HAPPENED that the captain of the *Prinz* was Friedrich Heinrich von Diedrich, a very rhythmical name indeed, and he knew Willerby and liked him; he knew Lania felt a sense of loss that her dazzling beauty was so diminished; he had met the Kaiser and had had his own importance to the empire impressed upon him. Germany was some day to become a great, the greatest, maritime power: and here was a pirate, a lone Yankee pirate, murdering people, burning ships, butchering women—for the massacre ashore was credited to Williams' instigation—and torturing men.

Von Diedrich wanted to believe that Williams had deliberately put out Willerby's eyes, and, though no one told him that, he decided that it was true and implied, rather than said, as much in his log.

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But that his cutter and his officers had been compelled to ride under a pirate's cannon and take orders from a native, a savage—that sent the bold captain into a paroxysm of rage.

He learned from Willerby that both the *Bebe* and the *Mary* had gone into the channel from the south entrance; therefore at high tide it would probably be deep enough for the *Prinz* to pick her way. He learned that the north entrance had been blocked by the lugger which Williams sank; he learned therefore that Williams was trapped. Williams seemed to have picked out a very choice position.

It was a difficult place to get into. The channel was narrow, and at the south entrance the rocky walls of the island almost overhung certain parts, thereby making it impossible to shoot across at the piratical schooner. But von Diedrich would go in! He would go at once. It would take some time, for he would have to go carefully.

He called his leadsmen into the chains, got out a small boat and sent an officer ahead a little to pick out the course and act as a sort of long-distance pilot and had ammunition brought up ready to rake the schooner as soon as she came within range.

Willerby refused to put himself under the care of the ship's surgeon when he knew what was going on. He and Lania, she being covered with a long officer's cape, were taken on to the bridge, and every move that was made, every turn, was explained to the blind man, who gripped the rail hard in both hands and fused his body in the ship to give her sentience of her mission.

The *Prinz* had no sooner headed definitely toward the channel entrance than a mere speck of white—a white bit of cloth—revealed itself on one of the overhanging rocks toward which Williams almost continually had kept his glasses.

At once his voice rang loud and hard:

"The crews to their boats. Make ready the kedge-anchor to the boom block. All hands man the lines to warp her ahead."

There was a hustle and bustle on board. Other work was dropped. The dead, too numerous to be properly shrouded in canvas, were left in a row, covered. Women brought up the rifles, loaded them, laid them by the starboard rail. The brass cannon was trained shoreward.

Two small boats underneath the boom received the kedge that was lowered away by the capstan, made it fast between them, stern and bow, and rowed ahead to the end of the line, then cut it away. It fell to the rocky coral bottom and took hold. But the crew was short-handed; it could not work as fast as usual in such heavy labor. But gradually the schooner was pulled ahead; above the kedge she stood, and the anchor was lifted up and again lowered to the two small boats.

The cannibals on shore had been quick to see what was going on. They charged down, banging with the few rifles. Work was dropped on board for the moment to drive them back well out of range. Williams snatched up rifle after rifle and fired to kill. Shot after shot did.

He was no longer a grim, silent man. He shouted continually, heartening the natives with cheery words. Somebody always has to do it with natives in a pinch, and he no longer had Banoo, and Nauma was not with him.

Inch by inch the schooner crept along. The cannibals, working their way to sheltering rocks, attempted a sniping fire. Occasionally one of the natives on board heard the furious *zz-z-zip* of a bullet; two or three were hit.

The firing and yelling carried to the *Prinz*. The cutter was sent ahead to scout and find just what was happening. It hastened back to report that the natives were attacking and that Williams was trying to kedge out.

Von Diedrich was in a hurry, but he took his time. He was a careful captain. There was no going on the rocks for him. Besides he did not believe that Williams could get out—and, if he did get out, the *Prinz* with steam and sail would run him down. He wanted above all things else to get in a position to bring his guns to bear: he would knock that pirate to pieces plank by plank!

He had worked his way squarely into the channel, making good speed considering the perils of the rocks, with his steam. Another hundred yards and he could open fire; in perhaps less than a hundred he could slightly put up the helm and bring the forward gun to bear.

And then the thing happened squarely before his eyes. Right down as if to fall a-top the *Prinz* huge blocks of rock dropped and leaped. Men who saw them coming down leaped to one side as if to dodge a brick, as if leaping a lesser distance than to

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shore would have served them. Some thought they heard a muffled explosion accompanying the fall of the rock, but few had that fancy, if it was a fancy. The mass broke away from the cliff and dropped with a mighty grinding and splash. The channel was blocked. The *Prinz* was shut out from further progress.

Von Diedrich was a crazy man for seconds. He roared and blasphemed. Willerby swore that the devil himself aided that man to have such luck come up to his aid. A prayer for vengeance slipped from Lania's lips.

But von Diedrich swore that he would get him. He would! He would back out—there was no room for turning—and force his way through the other entrance. He would even run aground if it would bring him within range of the schooner. He would knock that schooner to flinder, or his name was not Friedrich Heinrich von Diedrich!

Backing in a narrow, rock-line channel is precarious work. But the *Prinz* started back—then a muffled explosion, more an immense *puff* of sound than a crack or roar, and a thousand ton of rock and dirt detached itself from the barren cliff and came crashing squarely into the *Prinz*' path. She was hemmed in, blocked, imprisoned, fore and aft. There was no escape but to blast and dredge her way out. There was nothing with which to dredge and blast.

Days and days before Williams had picked the channel and carried the whole of his dynamite to the strategic points, laying the charges and preparing the fuses, covering them carefully with bamboo tubes. Then he had waited, and Chief Nauma had touched them off.

There was no escape for the *Prinz*—and another captain of the Kaiser's navy was due for a court-martial. He had been tricked into losing his ship. A whale-boat could be sent down the coast to Savage Island, and somebody would be found to come along and take away the crew. But the *Prinz* herself must be abandoned or a guard left in that wild place for indefinite months until a relief could be sent out from Germany.

She was as helpless as if beached with keel knocked out—and the irony of it was that there was not a thing wrong with her. Williams could, as easily as not, have given instructions for the rock to be timed to fall on her instead of before and aft, but he had chosen the more humiliating rather than the more destructive. And so the *Prinz* was left to wear her days away, landlocked, isolated, beyond salvage for months on months.

At the other mouth of the channel the harassment of the cannibals grew more dangerous and persistent. The men who carried the kedge forward each time were open targets, and their nerves were beginning to shake.

Williams leaped overboard and swam to the nearest boat, heartening them by presence and words to the work. The rifles from the sheltered side of the schooner fired continuously. The capstan creaked and whined. The schooner moved on. At last the mouth was gained; then Gilbert Lang, obeying Williams' shout, pointed the cannon at a thick group just barely out of rifle-range and seemingly preparing to rush down into the shallows and with club and tomahawk cut out the small boats. The terrifying roar of the cannon rolled and echoed, and the group fled, leaving many black spots on the gray sand.

The *Mary* was out. In another half hour of warping she could catch the wind, but she lay to. There was no hurry now. The *Prinz* was blocked. The cannibals were left too far behind to do harm.

IT WAS about an hour later that three natives, mere specks they seemed at first, came scrambling down the cliff at the north entrance, splashed into the water and like porpoises came to the schooner. Chief Nauma and the two natives were jubilant. They had caught the *Prinz* squarely between the two blasts, and over and over they told what had happened and how to the admiring men and women and children.

The schooner was no sooner filled with wind and stood out to sea than Williams put her aback, and the strangely impressive burial at sea cast a deep gloom over the ship, over the natives, who in the excitement of fighting, of escaping, had for a time forgotten the dead that numbered some five or six less than a score.

Wiliams was very much moved. Gilbert Lang especially noticed it. He called the whole of the company after and from the poop spoke to them. What he said was brief and simple. Even Gilbert Lang, standing with Uala's arms about him, could

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understand every word of the native tongue, it was so simple.

"You have followed me, and I have led you into dangers, many of you into death. I have had little to give in return. Nothing that would be valued in the country from where I came, where friendship is brittle as the shell of a crab. I shall have less to give you from now on. I shall be hunted and hated by white men as never before. I am taking you to your homes, to your islands.

"Then I shall go away alone. And, when I leave you, I shall give you then the words I give you now: it is my only gift, and those words have a value beyond the price of all that you could pay, and they are these: trust no white man! And now shall we give our friends into the keeping of the ocean. Their fathers will welcome them. More praise than that can not be given."

Abruptly he stopped.

The wind flapped into the sails; the water gurgled along the hull, and the sky itself, veiled again for a time with the marching columns of dark clouds, treading across the heavens to measure of the distant roll of the thunder-drums, seemed aiding the solemnity. Men and women broke into the primeval chants of wo—what mattered it that at sundown they would gaily feast in memory of the dead—and intoned the grief-laden words inconsolably.

One by one the bodies were lifted to the plank and one by one dropped into the ocean that, with its myriad little wave arms, seemed reaching up to clasp them for the sleep unwakening. Old Ocean knows no race or breed or caste; her broad, heaving breast pillows all that come to her worn out with life, and until the Judgment Day she rocks them soothingly in the cradle of her tides.

The last body overboard was that of Banoo. It lay on the plank a few seconds as if the hands that were to slip it into the ocean were reluctant to part, even in death, with one so admired. Williams, with arms folded and head drooped, stared down at the upturned countenance whereon was still what at least no very fertile imagination would mark for a smile. It was as if the body knew that the soul, or spirit, or whatever it may be that pushes out from the fleshy vesture when what men call life is finished, was contented.

A gentle splash and it was over.

At a word from Williams, Nauma shouted. Men may die and be buried, but a ship must go on. The schooner was brought around before the wind, sails trimmed, and the general clatter and work of stowing and lashing began.

Williams went down to his cabin. There were reckonings to make and a course to lay. But he paced slowly back and forth with noiseless footsteps, a lonely man, in the very hour of his triumphant daring a depressed and doubt-ridden man. He had told the natives that he was going to take them home not to impress them, not to hearten them for the trip, but so that he could not afterward weaken in his determination. He was through. He knew it was best. The sea was becoming crowded, anyway. It was too hard to keep out of sight and in obscure ports.

Little it mattered to him, but sooner or later those who sailed with him would dangle from the yardarm. True, Gilbert Lang remained. It would mean much to have that boy as a companion through what years were to come. It would mean much to have him living in the next hut of some remote village where men-of-war and commissioners would not come upon them.

BUT AT the thought of Gilbert Lang, Williams, though his narrowed, burning eyes grew somewhat tender, clamped his jaw until the muscles at the base of his cheeks bulged.

"He must do it. He shall do it! He must do it. He shall do it!" rang through his head with insistent iteration as if a voice almost strange, though not wholly unknown, were speaking from somewhere within his brain.

There was Uala, though. Thought of her almost silenced the toneless voice.

"I'll have it over with now," said Williams to himself, and, being a man of action, he sent for Gilbert Lang.

The boy came, but scarcely a boy now he seemed. Slender and indelibly marked with youth, but he too was naked from the waist up and tanned, and his body was not unmarked with the imprint of blows and cuts from much fighting, though none of them might be called injuries. He carried himself with the easy poise of one who has found himself unafraid, of one who has learned to look at a foreboding future and not shrink or flinch. In spirit and manner and garb, Gilbert Lang had found his model in

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Williams: to be such a man as he was the pattern to which he had set himself.

"You heard what I said to the natives?" Williams asked, and something, not quite definable but ominous, in the words and way of saying them gave the boy a start.

He had heard; he had wondered, but of course he had thought that Williams excepted him from the sweeping classification of men, white-skinned, who were not to be trusted.

"Yes, I heard."

"And Uala, what did she say?"

"Nothing. Of course she doesn't think of me as any more of a white man than you."

"And you, Gilbert Lang?"

"You know how I feel about it."

"One, two, ten, twenty, forty years—or more—your life may stretch out. I am going to do all that I can do for you. More than I want to do. But, boy, you are going back to the States——"

"You trust me no more than that!" Gilbert Lang cried quickly, offended, hurt.

"I am going to send you back," Williams said slowly, dropping the words as if each were a blow against the boy's ears. "That is all I can do for you. A year from now you will remember a dream, a nightmare perhaps, and in it will be certain people, such as Lania, Willerby, DuBeque, Williams. Uala is beautiful now. A few years and she will grow fat and begin to scold; a few more and she will begin to wither; her teeth will drop out and her breasts sag. She will have pains—rheumatism, like Marua; garrulous like her, too.

"And you—in these seas a man must work, work as if the devil drove him, or he takes to nursing gin bottles, to the vilest practises of the natives and remembers none of the decencies in which he was born. You have known good things, fine things, Gilbert Lang, and in time the memory of them will drive you lower than the wretchedest beach-comber. In this world you have to live what you know, live right up to the best of it, or you weaken and rot inside.

"If you were a little gutter-snipe, blown out of some city street by a whirlwind—but you are not. Friends, books, music—the life of the brain, that's all the life on this earth that counts. I know. The excitement, the adventure—that is only strong wine. Aimless adventure, just going about looking for it, that is a tonic till persisted in; then it leads to outlawry. In this world you have to fight on the side of the law or against it.

"You may hate the men of law—you may admire the others. But at worst and best they are only men. The principles above them, beyond them—those are what count. I am a pirate, down on ship's records as such. You see how it happens. I need things. I have to take them or be taken. You are going back to the States, Gilbert Lang, because, if I were your age, the greatest gift I could have from a man of mine would be what I have just told you."

Gilbert Lang was shaken to the foundations of himself. The intensity with which Williams spoke, each word distinct and driven with the whole force of conviction, destroyed the boy's newly, painfully, constructed resolution to abandon the life of his own people. He saw that Williams was more than earnest: that he was sacrificial in sending from him this one friend of his people. But Gilbert Lang was a man of his word. The hour of a promise in his family was great as that of an oath.

"I can't go," he said regretfully, gladly—such was the conflict. "I can't go, Williams. You and Uala."

"I? I am but a sharp-beaked bird that has no nest and no fellows. And I would rather remember that you are back in your own country, doing the things you instinctively must do, studying, working in your way, meeting people of culture—and they will be friends: it is only when earthquakes crack beneath your feet that you learn how little of friendship there is in the best of men. I was unfortunate. Temblors seem to have followed me around the world.

"You may live as most men do, past the three-score-ten without ever having need of a friend more than for the casual little favors of a quiet life. I would rather know you were back there, comfortable—for a man can no more live comfortably out of the element into which he was born, the intellectual element—the psychic, if that means anything to you—than a fish can take to the air. Again I say, boy, I would rather know you were there than to have you with me, dear as you have become; than see you eaten away with leprosy, the mental leprosy that gets to all of us down here that have no clear, definite work to do.

"And Uala—she will weep her heart out for six months, then marry and name her

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first-born after you. Don't judge her by the standards of life-long anguish that a girl of refinement among your people would feel. The natives are children, tempestuous, loyal, devoted. But, though they have the child's capacity for suffering, they have the blessed gift of forgetting. If you had married her, then—I am not sure. I believe I would drag you back from wherever you went. But now you must go. We'll pick up a trader, and he'll get you to Sydney or Honolulu, where you take a boat home.

"Now send Uala to me."

MIDNIGHT. The heavens were black; the sea was black; the air black. Like a beetle entombed in amber, the little schooner stood into the darkness with only two little side-lights flecking the blackness and a faint auroral glow diffused from the binnacle into the face of the big naked man at the wheel. Somewhere in the waist a woman was crying. She had been weeping for hours, and by her sat an old hag, huddled, crooning disconsolate words about the unhappy fate of a heart that defies the power of the devil-devil man. The ship creaked and groaned as if it understood.

Across the poop from rail to rail a man walked with slow, endless monotony. He heard the moaning of the woman. From time to time he paused at the skylight and looked down. Faintly perceptible by the lamp's small flame was the man who sat motionless at the table below—motionless, yet holding a pen at the mouth of an inkwell while an opened book lay waiting for the words that might be scrawled across the unstained page.

At last he wrote in the name of the month, the date and year, consulted some figures on a slip of paper and set down the perfunctory nautical observations. He hesitated. Much had happened that day. Memories swarmed at him: fighting and work, the blindness of Willerby, Lania, the *Prinz*, the burials, Gilbert Lang, Uala, Uala whom he had brought to a flood of tears, though he would have killed another man who so much as stained her eyes with them.

There was much to write, but why write any of it? He could never forget, and the log was for no other man's eyes. Besides, once he started, he might be led on and on to writing of himself, to pitying himself. No. There was nothing to put down for that day's log: or there was too much to put down. It all amounted to the same thing. But the pen touched the paper and quite automatically, registering in ink certain sentences that trailed across his mind, wrote:

Uala will forgive me, but he—all through the years, especially when old and slippered before the fire, he will think back, back to youth, and wonder regretfully if after all he didn't miss the best of life by not going to the devil.

THE END

THE AFRICAN AND THE WHEELBARROW

By THOMAS S. MILLER

N SOKOTO the black still carries his load a dead-weight on his shaved head, the mother her baby on her back. That part of the world had never known a wheel of any kind. Not even a wheel to raise the bucket from the deep well.

So one might expect no little curiosity when the first wheel came to Sokoto. A canoe brought a wheelbarrow up the Niger. It arrived long, long overdue. Inquiries discovered that the artful canoemen had been doing a lucrative business at the villages en route by exhibiting the marvel. Then they had capsized in the Boussa Rapids and had haunched on the bank in solemn palaver. The wheelbarrow was a Jonah. It was *ju-ju*—magic. But if

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they let it lie there the white man would be very angry. So they had hiked off on a three-days journey to a wizard with a reputation for powerful magic, who for a consideration commensurate with the great service demanded of him had come and made antidoting magic that rendered the strange thing harmless, but evidently had not succeeded in entirely quieting the blacks' superstitious dread, for when they eventually arrived they unloaded the barrow with incantations and very, very cautious handling, the whilst their eyes rolled askance at the white man, to see if he was putting some bad trick over them.

There was a little matter of a ditch to be dug and the earth wheeled to a fill-in. The white man patiently instructed them in the simple process of shoveling dirt into the barrow, raising the handles and trundling to the fill-in and dumping. A very simple proceeding, but followed by his black pupils with prodigious mental strain and awe. They had to be patiently familiarized with the barrow, convinced of its harmlessness, "broken to it," in fact, as colts are broken to automobiles and threshing-engines. Then the white man went off to other duties.

In about half an hour he took a look at the fill-in. One barrowload of earth had arrived there. He went to the ditch to see what was the matter. Incredible was the picture. A six-foot ebony giant gingerly held the handles up, but apparently conceived that his whole duty—had no thought to push, for another giant was down all-fours at the wheel, turning it toward him with his hands, crawling backward toward the fill-in. There was promising material in that black. He had originality—an inventive mind. He thought things out for himself. His mental process no doubt was thus: the wheel goes round; when it goes round it drags the barrow behind it; it does not go round of its own accord; it must be pulled round. Thus had he triumphantly solved an abstruse problem.

The white man did not laugh. It is as big a mistake to laugh at the simple African as at children. He is hurt and sulks. The white man gave more patient instructions, and to show how perfectly harmless was the barrow—to persuade away their superstitious fear—he kicked it and abused it and was altogether downright mean to it. Then he resumed the kindergarten, until he had the blacks boldly desecrating it with dirt and wheeling it to the fill-in. He went off happily satisfied. Such little incidents relieved the monotony of his exile.

He went to his veranda hammock but had hardly settled himself when a furious uproar arose and the blacks shrieked past him in a bee-line for the village and the hut of the wizard, bawling that the barrow—they called it a "land canoe"—was bewitched—was possessed by an evil spirit. The wizard came in his robes of office, to wit a long cloak of chickens' tail-feathers and a three-foot head-dress of grass and filth, and exhorted the evil spirit to depart from the barrow. He brought a hen for the evil spirit's reincarnation, for they naturally did not want an evil spirit roaming around loose without a home, or he might catch a man asleep and wait until his dream-soul went on a journey and then sneak into the man's body and dispossess his spirit.

So he conjured and made magic and the blacks raised a fearful hullabaloo to scare the spirit out of the barrow, until the white man lost patience and grabbed the handles, to show them what he thought of the evil-spirit stuff. Lo, in a jiffy he found himself alone in the world. The blacks flashed to hiding like rabbits to holes at pop of gun. Even the wizard stayed not to take chances on that squeaking spirit. Yes; the wheel squeaked. So the white man got a can of grease and did real spirit-conjuring. Yes; that old can of grease proved the most potent spirit-conjurer within a radius of seven villages. Thereafter whenever the spirit in the barrow squeaked the blacks came to the all-powerful white man for "spirit medicine magic."

Thus did a wheel come to Sokoto.

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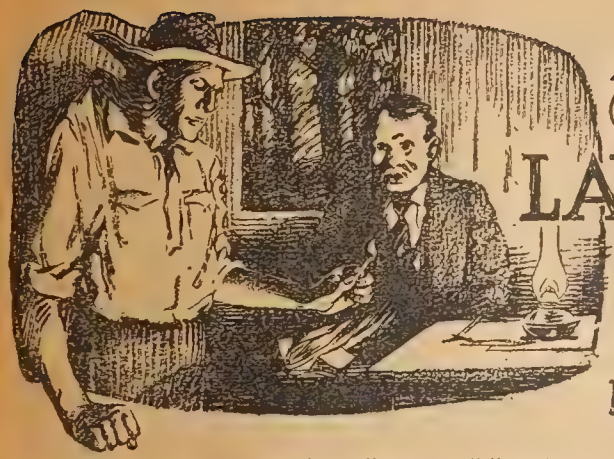

The LAVENDER LETTER

by HAPSBURG LIEBE

Author of "Peep-Eye," "Howling Jim's Pal," etc.

THE Southern mountains logging-camps are quick and lavish, and sometimes foolish, with their nicknames. The new outfit in Purgatory Fork Valley, however, chose very appropriately the sobriquet they fastened on their superintendent, a small and quiet, sly fox of a middle-aged and supposedly unmarried man named Persons; they called him "Owl-Eye." Nor was their choosing far out of the way when they nicknamed Jim Cassel "Blue Lightning." Cassel was twenty-four and a sort of drifter. He seemed to have not yet realized that there was anything more serious to think about than the next meal—or the next fight.

For Cassel was a fighter, though he had always been fair and clean in it. To take the part of any weaker side and give battle for it, that was Cassel's long suit and delight; for four years he had been doing much of this. All on earth the man really feared may be embraced in the one word women. He had never been used to women.

When in the course of his happy-go-lucky wanderings Jim Cassel became a member of the new logging outfit on Purgatory Fork, he began by whipping the inevitable bully, thereby winning his nickname, which did not displease him in the least. Then he demonstrated his extraordinary ability as a timberjack and was forthwith given a woods foreman's place. At this time, almost at the very start, Owl-Eye Persons was on the edge of losing his job because of his inefficient logging methods; he had faked his letters of recommendation, deceived old John H. Ancray and obtained the superintendency unfairly. Jim Cassel suggested and advised and pointed out, and Persons succeeded in keeping his job.

Then Fate, if I may call it that, sent to Purgatory Fork Valley from the big hills of western North Carolina one of the only things in the world that Blue Lightning feared—a woman. She was young and slender and supple, brown-eyed and brown-haired, as pretty as a wild rose and as sweet as a honeysuckle's bloom, and her name was Jessie McKibbon. She had come to visit the Bill Harkraders, who lived near where Purgatory Fork poured its crystal waters into those of the Little Doe, just below the wide timber boundary of the John H. Ancray Logging Company.

The Bill Harkraders gave a "frolic" in honor of Miss McKibbon, and only two from the Ancray camp were invited, these being Owl-Eye Persons and Blue Lightning Jim Cassel. Old Bill Harkrader asked Persons because he was superintendent; he asked Cassel because—well, he had been present when Cassel whipped the hitherto invincible Purgatory Fork bully, and that to him had been the unmistakable measure of a man. He had fallen in love, so to speak, with Blue Lightning Jim.

Now Cassel didn't want to go to that dance, for he knew there would be women; there always are, of course. And he did not wish to risk insulting Bill Harkrader by refusing to accept the mark of favor that had been conferred upon him, a stranger. Harkrader was a mountaineer aristocrat,

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a patriarch, the uncrowned king of the valley. Cassel spent many hours in worrying over his dilemma. Finally, however, he gripped it by its horns and looked it straight in the eye, and he thought he saw a loophole.

He would go with Persons down to the Harkraders' big hewn-log house on the night of the dance, but he wouldn't go in; he would sit outside and talk with old Bill, who liked to talk.

And this he did.

It was a fine night in early Summer. There was a full, bright moon, and the scent of wildflowers was heavy in the air. Now and then the cries of night-hawks and owls came in sharp contrast with every other sound—the lively music of fiddle and banjo, the rhythmic tread of the dancers' feet, the dancing-songs and the merry laughter of youthful and carefree hearts of the everlasting hills. Old Bill and Jim Cassel sat in chairs in the front yard in the moonlight, and old Bill smoked his cob pipe and told of frolics and frolics that he had gone to when he was a wild buck of a young man.

Then Harkrader bent forward suddenly, tapped his companion on the knee and changed the subject abruptly.

"D'ye know what I would do ef I was a wild buck of a young man now, Blue Lightnin', and foot-loose from any fambly?" he asked.

"What?"

Harkrader sat back in his chair and folded his arms over his broad, gaunt chest. His bearded face was serious, and his eyes flashed back the moonbeams that fell upon them.

"John H. Ancray robbed all o' the people o' this here valley, Jim," said he, his voice low and as hard as iron. "All but me, that is. He had a man to come out here and stay a week, a-huntin' and a-fishin', and that man told all o' the people out here—'cept me—that their titles to their land wasn't wo'th anything much. And he made 'em believe it! He edvised 'em to sell it the fust chanst they got, and a month later John H. Ancray come along and bought it fo' edzactly half o' what it was wo'th! Jim, the' ain't no finer timber in the whole State 'an this in Purgatory Fork Valley."

"But that," muttered Cassel, "ain't a-tellin' me what you'd do ef ye was young and foot-loose."

Again the aged mountaineer bent toward the man with whom he had, so to speak, fallen in love.

"No, but this is a-tellin' ye; I'd hold up the Ancray pay-rolls ontel I had enough o' money to pay these people back what got skeered and sold their land fo' half price!"

Cassel frowned.

"And that means—jest what?"

"It means ef I was you, wi' yore nerve, I'd do it," declared Bill Harkrader, tugging at his whitish beard. "It was a low-down shame, Jim!"

Cassel rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"I'll think it over," he said. "Yes, it was shore a low-down shame, and it sort o' puts gall in my blood."

As I have before indicated, he had been righting wrongs almost since he had reached manhood's estate. Here was about the biggest wrong he had ever known, and it would be but natural for him to lift both hands against it. The big difficulty was that it would bring him afoul of the law. He had never been afoul of the law.

The sudden dying of the music in the house startled him, broke his train of thought off short. The youthful laughter stood out more clearly, more jubilantly now. Blue Lightning turned his gaze toward the porch and saw Owl-Eye Persons and Jessie McKibbon coming down the steps together. He rose at sight of the woman, seeming very stalwart in his spiked and laced boots and clay-colored corduroys. His heart was in his throat; he took off his broad-rimmed woodsman's hat and crumpled it nervously. In a fight he could face a dozen men at once, but this——

Bill Harkrader calmly took his cob pipe from his mouth.

"Jim," said he, "that there is a young lady from Nawth Ca'liner, and she's a cousin o' our'n; it was her we had this here frolic for. Her name's Jess McKibbon. Shake hands with him, Jess. He's all right, shore; I've seed him fight, Jess. His name's Jim Cassel, but they calls him Blue Lightnin'."

BLUE LIGHTNING was grateful to the soft night, which hid his blushing and the trembling of his limbs and the look of abject fright that had come to his eyes. If the girl noticed anything whatever of his discomfiture, she gave no sign of it; she accepted his hand, nodded and smiled. Persons was

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looking on with a highly amused grin, and Cassel had to grip himself hard to keep from slapping both the little logging superintendent's jaws.

Miss McKibbon spoke musically to Owl-Eye:

"Ef you'd bring us some water, Mr. Persons——"

"Sure; all right," the superintendent said dapperly, and he hurried toward the spring.

Old Bill rose now and set his chair forward for Jessie.

"Set down, you two," grinned old Bill, turning slowly toward the house.

The pair sat down, and there came a silence. Cassel found his eyes stealing glances at the girl, whom the kindly moonlight made rarely beautiful instead of merely as pretty as a wild rose. He began to get over his fear of her, a little; he leaned slightly in her direction, and she smiled an invitation to him to talk.

"It's a mighty fine night," he ventured—boldly, it seemed to him.

"I never seed a finer one," said Jessie. "Do you happen to live clost about here, Jim?"

"Jim!" said Jim to himself. "She called me Jim, jest like she'd allus knowed me!" Then, aloud: "I—I live wherever my hat is off, Jessie. I ain't got no people much. I——"

Persons came up with a single cup of water. The girl took it, drank no more than a spoonful of it, threw the rest out and gave the cup back to Owl-Eye.

"Much obleeged to ye, Mr. Persons," said she, looking away from him as if she were entirely through with him, turning back to Blue Lightning.

"What was it you was a-sayin', Jim?"

"I—I——"

Cassel looked to see whether Persons were laughing. Fortunately for all concerned—and himself especially, no doubt—Persons wasn't. But two chairs were there in the yard. The Purgatory Fork superintendent acted quite properly; he walked off.

"What was it you was a-sayin', Jim?" Jessie McKibbon repeated.

"I was a-sayin'—I was a-sayin' that I ain't got no people much," stammered Cassel.

She led him on, and he became natural in his part of their conversation. It rather surprized him to find that she was, after all, nothing to be afraid of. Half an hour and they went into the house and danced "Skip-to-my-Lou" with the others, and Cassel had to admit to himself that it was the most amazing experience of his life so far.

On the way to the camp that night, Owl-Eye Persons did all the talking. He had fallen heels over ears in love with the girl from North Carolina's hills, but his innate cunning forbade him to let out any hint of it. As for Jim Cassel, he was too busy living over his last minute with Jessie McKibbon to pay any attention to the educated but dry mouthings of Owl-Eye. Again Cassel saw her standing across the gate from him, smiling at him, telling him that she had "enjoyed dancin' with him a heap" and that she "hoped to see more of him afore she went back to Nawth Ca'liner."

Jim Cassel was also dreaming of a new cabin with flowers in the front yard. True to the way of his mountaineer blood, he was in love for the rest of his life, though he scarcely knew it then; he could not fully grasp such a big and wonderful thing so soon.

He had forgotten, for the time being, that which old Bill Harkrader had said to him concerning John H. Ancray's having cheated the folk of Purgatory Fork Valley of half the value of their timbered lands. But this was a matter that did not lie unremembered by Jim Cassel for very long.

TEN days passed. In those ten days Blue Lightning had walked from the Ancray camp's commissary to Bill Harkrader's big old hewn-log house no less than half a dozen times with the North Carolina girl. This attracted some attention, of course, but nobody had anything to say about it openly; they knew Cassel's ability as a basher far too well to make sport of him to his face. Even Superintendent Persons kept strictly to himself all the fun he felt over it, if he felt any.

For one thing, Owl-Eye knew that Jim Cassel was holding his job for him; for another, Owl-Eye was so afraid of Jim Cassel that he carried a stub-nosed automatic pistol as a measure of self-protection. Persons was just as madly in love with the McKibbon girl as Cassel was, and he plainly saw difficulty looming up between them

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in the future. Persons was not sure just how he was going to do it, but he meant to possess her.

Then Blue Lightning decided to propose.

But—but how? To go through gantlets of fire would be easier! After lying awake nearly all of a long night in the up-stairs sleeping-quarters of the big and rough camp boarding-house, trying in vain to think of exactly the right thing to say and the right way in which to say it, Cassel came to the conclusion that the ordeal would be altogether too much for him. He could ask her in a letter, of course, if only he could read and write. But he could do neither!

More days passed, and Cassel twice tried to put the fateful question. But the words stuck; they just wouldn't come. It is strange, perhaps, that so brave a man otherwise should so dread a simple thing like that. But it was human nature—as it existed in mountaineer Jim Cassel, at least.

Then a way out occurred to him. It was a miserably poor way out, and yet it was a way, all the same; Jessie had begun to talk of going home, and he had to do something! He sent to a little lowland town for a box of rather expensive stationery; it was of a delicate tint of lavender. That evening, he strode into Persons' little office, which was in a partitioned-off corner of the commissary building.

"Looky here, Owl-Eye," said Jim Cassel desperately, "you're a-goin' to do me a favor."

Persons swung half around from his scarred desk, on which were a lighted nickel-plated lamp, a time-sheet half filled with names and figures, pen, ink and a clouded blotter. Blue Lightning's keen eyes were upon Persons, and they made him wholly uncomfortable; one of his hands crept, unnoticed by Cassel, toward the butt of the automatic he carried.

"Sure," he replied, forcing himself to smile at the strapping, hickory-strong young man who stood over him. "What is it?"

"And you ain't a-goin' to say anything about it," Blue Lightning went on with a quick glance at the door.

"Of course—I won't," agreed Owl-Eye.

Cassel bent a little toward the superintendent. "Ef ever ye do say anything about it, Owl-Eye," he growled, "I'll skin ye and hang the hide o' ye on a fence to dry, and, when it's dry, I'll beat ye to death with it. Ef ever I spoke Gawspel, that's Gawspel. Don't fo'git it, Owl-Eye."

He put a hand inside his blue shirt and drew out the box of lavender stationery, which he put lightly down on the desk. He stepped to the door, locked it and went back to Persons.

"Write a letter fo' me, Owl-Eye," he ordered.

Persons obediently opened the box and took from it a sheet of paper and an envelope. Jim Cassel was staring at the flame of the lamp now and thinking, thinking. There came a little period of silence, which Persons finally shattered with an ill-timed attempt at a joke.

"Does it make any difference," he asked, his grin unpleasant, "who I write the letter to?"

Cassel fairly jumped. His eyes glittered.

"Don't fo'git what I said about beatin' ye to death wi' yore own hide," he snapped. Then he went on, reddening in spite of himself, "Write it to Miss Jessie McKibbon. Tell her I want to—to—to marry her. Tell her I'm a good logger and a hard worker; tell her I'll work my hands to the bare bone fo' her; tell her I'll allus be good to her—so he'p me God. And sign my name to it—yores truly, Jim Cassel."

It scarcely occurred to him that Persons held his fate easily in the hollow of his hand. Not that Blue Lightning was a fool, however. Blue Lightning would not have believed that little Persons would dare to deceive him. The superintendent reached for a pen, dabbed it into the bottle of ink and poised it over the lavender sheet. His eyes were crafty, but Cassel didn't see it; he smiled somehow darkly, but Cassel didn't see that, either. As a matter of fact, Cassel saw only brown eyes, brown hair and a face as pretty as a wild rose and as sweet as a honeysuckle's bloom.

Then Persons, that mean and shriveled, madly jealous soul, flagrantly spat into the face of the god of decency, as it were—did quite the most daring thing of his snake-crooked career. On the sheet of lavender-colored paper, he wrote this:

DEAR JESSIE:

I must ask you to quit tagging after me, because it is likely to make serious trouble for me with my wife and children.

Yours truly,
JIM CASSEL.

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Daring, yes! But Persons' automatic was at hand, and there was a big chance that Jim Cassel would never know. Persons was now more than ever determined to possess Jessie McKibbon, let the cost be small or great.

"There," said he, when he had sealed the letter, "is exactly what you asked me to write. Shall I have a man take it down to Harkrader's for you?"

Cassel took the letter from his superintendent's hand.

"No," he said; "I'm a-goin' to give it to her myself."

Persons went pale at that. But the other didn't see it. Then Cassel walked hurriedly out of the little office, went straightway to Bill Harkrader's house and called for Jessie. She came to the door, smiling winsomely at him; he gave her the lavender letter and strode off without a word—with his heart pounding terrifically.

When he went from the woods to the camp for the next noonday meal, he half expected an answer to his letter. There was none. That evening, after supper, Owl-Eye Persons sent for him to come to the office. Persons was in his desk chair, with the light at his back, when Cassel entered.

"Jim, old fellow," the superintendent began in a pseudo-sympathetic voice, "I'm sorry for you. I saw that you were not going to find good news in this. She laughed about it to me."

He gave a white letter to Cassel. His other hand gripped secretly the butt of his stub-nosed, murdering automatic. Cassel thrust the letter savagely back at him.

"You read it fo' me," he snapped. "You know —— well that I cain't read!"

Quite unnecessarily, maybe, Persons had gone to the pains of writing this letter in a perpendicular, schoolgirlish hand. He opened it and read it aloud, though in low tones. It was the hardest, most heartless, most brutal turn-down his devilish mind had been able to devise. When he had finished, every fiber in Blue Lightning Jim's hickory-strong young frame was quivering.

CASSEL scratched a match and cursed it because it failed to ignite. He scratched another and burned the letter on a desk-leaf. Then he went out, and the night swallowed him. When he had gone, Owl-Eye Persons laughed in his sleeve—and partly from relief. Persons was sure now that he had removed the greatest of the barriers that had been between him and the North Carolina girl; he figured that Cassel, the drifter, would leave Purgatory Fork Valley immediately, which was exactly what he wished. He was confident of his ability to hold his job himself, after having seen so much of how the work of logging should be done.

Jim Cassel went deep into the black woods, stumbled over the body of a fallen tree, halted and sat down on it. For hours he sat there, half numb from bitter disappointment. He told himself over and over again that he had been a fool; that he never had had any reason to hope that the girl would accept him; that he was a hundred miles below her; that—oh, he told himself many such things, but there was solace in none of them. Over and above it all still stood the glaring, sterner thought: He had seen only that one girl that he cared for and wanted, and he couldn't have her.

Then he remembered all that old Bill Harkrader had said to him concerning what he would do if he were a wild buck of a young man and foot-loose.

"That," decided Blue Lightning Jim, "is what I'll do. I'll hold up Ancray payrolls ontel I've paid these here Purgatory Fork folks back fo' all they lost in sellin' their land."

Cassel went to the camp and to the boarding-house, found his bunk in the pitchy dark up-stairs, lay himself down without removing even his footwear, and went to sleep by sheer force of will. He awoke at daybreak, put on his best clay-colored corduroys and his best spiked boots, his best blue shirt and his best broad-rimmed hat and left his other clothing for anybody who might want it. A man who is going to play the part of a hold-up artist can hardly be burdened with extra wearing-apparel.

Then he disappeared in the woods, and in the course of that day he added to his personal effects a big, blued revolver and a belt filled with cartridges for it; he bought them of a man he knew.

It was only four more days until pay-day for the Purgatory Fork logging outfit. Jim Cassel spent nearly all of that time alone in the woods.

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Now it was customary for Superintendent Persons to ride horseback to a bank in the nearest lowland town, on the morning of each month's fifteenth, and come back in the afternoon with the pay-money in a small leather satchel. When he rode toward the lowland on the morning of this fifteenth, Jim Cassel spied upon him from a vantage-point on a prominent mountain-spur and thereby learned the route he took among the many dim trails that threaded the thickly standing laurels. That Persons halted his horse for three minutes at the mouth of a dark little cove called Panther's Hole did not strike the watching Cassel as being anything out of the ordinary—not then, though it did later.

After Persons had ridden out of his sight, Blue Lightning Jim stole leisurely down the mountainside, going almost toward Panther's Hole. Just about the cove was the place that he had chosen as the scene of his first highway robbery in the name of the unfortunate people of Purgatory Fork Valley.

It was a long, long wait. Cassel tried to sleep a few hours of the time away, but he couldn't, his great will-power notwithstanding; the smiling face of the McKibbon girl haunted him like a beautiful ghost. He sat under a green beech tree and whittled and whittled until the middle of that sunny Summer afternoon had come.

Then his waiting was rewarded. Half a mile away, on the crooked trail below, he saw Persons riding, with the pay-satchel on the pommel of his saddle. Persons, he noted as the superintendent drew nearer, was staring straight ahead of him with eyes that really saw nothing, as if he were lost in a solemn study.

Cassel didn't bother to use his bandanna for a mask; he didn't care who knew that he was the hold-up man. With his big, blue revolver ready in his right hand, he walked softly toward the trail. As to his method of handling Persons, there would be no difficulty about that. He would say—

"Drop it and light a rag away from here!" That was what he would say—"Drop it and light a rag away from here!"

If Persons didn't obey—but Persons would obey.

Blue Lightning Jim crept closer to the trail, parted the screening laurels and peered cautiously toward Owl-Eye. Owl-Eye had stopped his horse, as he had done that morning, at the mouth of the Hole. He was looking closely over the surrounding territory now, but he failed to see Jim Cassel. Then Persons did a thing that caused Cassel to gasp in surprize.

The little superintendent threw the horse's rein over its head, dismounted hastily and dove into the deep gash in the mountain's breast. Another moment and he had thrust the pay-satchel under a ledge of stone and covered it with loose stone and leaves. Still another moment and he was galloping at a wild rate for the lowland town!

When the high light of the Purgatory Fork outfit was no longer within his range of vision, Jim Cassel stepped into the road. He soon figured out an explanation of Persons' strange proceedings.

"Owl-Eye's robbed hisself!" he exclaimed. "He's gone back to town to tell 'em he was held up!"

That was the answer, and the correct answer.

Blue Lightning put his revolver into its holster and bolted for Panther's Hole. He dug the pay-satchel from under the ledge, took the money out and put it inside his blue shirt—there was twelve hundred dollars of it—and hid the satchel where he had found it. This done, he went toward Bill Harkrader's home; Bill Harkrader could distribute the money among the folk of the valley better than he, Jim Cassel, could do it.

But he didn't go all the way to the house. He went only to the creek and called Harkrader down to him. The old hillman leaped Purgatory Fork with some of the agility of a boy, though he grunted heavily when his feet struck the stones of the other bank.

"What's up now, Blue Lightnin'?" he wanted to know.

"Nothin' much," and Cassel smiled a rather pale smile. "You rickollect what you said ye'd do ef ye was a wild buck of a young man and foot-loose, don't ye?"

"Yeuh." Harkrader said it queerly; he seemed ready either to laugh or to swear.

"Well," said Cassel, still with the pale smile, "I'm a wild buck of a young man and foot-loose, and I—I've begun it. Here's a lot o' money which I want ye to divide amongst the valley people as ye see fitten."

He went into his blue shirt after it. But the look he saw on Harkrader's bearded

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countenance arrested the movement of his hand.

"What's the matter wi' ye, Bill?" he half growled.

Harkrader laughed rather unmirthfully.

"Hadn't ye heerd about it, Jim? John Ancray has done made good! Mebbe his conscience bothered him; mebbe he didn't have enough o' money aforehand to make good—I cain't say. But he was out here yeste'day, and he left a check wi' me fo' every man what he cheated, squarin' accounts!" Harkrader didn't know that Ancray had suffered his first stroke of apoplexy a month before. "I've got you in a pickle, Jim, as shore as I'm knee-high to a hoppergrass!"

"I ain't so shore o' that," replied Blue Lightning.

And forthwith he explained the matter.

As he finished it, he caught sight of something that sent the blood flying to his sunburned cheeks; then he went very white. Up there in the Harkrader yard, leaning against the split-paling fence, eying him somehow peculiarly, was Jessie McKibbon, the North Carolina girl. Blue Lightning Jim remembered almost every word of the brutal and hard, heartless letter he thought she had written him. In a sudden fury, he whipped off from Bill Harkrader and disappeared in the laurels.

"Well," said old Bill to himself, "ef that don't beat anything! I wonder now, has he lost his mind—or what?"

Then he turned toward the house and saw the girl.

"Did ye notice that?" he asked her. "What got wrong with him, Jess; ha' ye got any idee?"

Miss McKibbon took the points of two neighbor palings in her two slim hands and bent her brown head over them.

"Goodness knows!" she said a little thickly.

A clear, bright tear rolled to the tip of her somewhat tilted, somewhat freckled nose and fell upon an innocent and unsuspecting ant that crawled along on the top railing of the fence.

JIM CASSEL went to the logging-camp by an indirect route. It was sheer force of habit, no doubt, that took him there now. He didn't know what he was going to do; he had no plan for the future; the bare sight of the McKibbon girl had upset him fearfully. He went into Persons' little office, dropped into the desk chair and sat there like a dummy for hours.

The sound of hoofbeats, some time after nightfall, brought him to his feet. He went to the doorway and saw dimly that three horsemen were dismounting in front of the boarding-house—they were Owl-Eye Persons, the lowland sheriff and John H. Ancray himself. They gave the reins of their horses to a convenient timberjack and went toward the office. Cassel had hidden his revolver under his corduroy coat and lighted the nickel-plated lamp, when they entered.

"What's the trouble, Super?" asked Blue Lightning.

John H. Ancray, elderly, florid, smooth-faced, answered the question.

"Persons was held up this afternoon," he said, "by a masked robber. I guess you haven't any idea who it could have been?"

"Me?" drawled Jim Cassel. He made himself laugh. "I shorely ain't no for-chune-teller!"

Ancray laughed, too, but not very much. Cassel looked toward Owl-Eye Persons; that small man was ill at ease, it was evident; he didn't have the insides necessary for an altogether successful thief. The germ of an idea was born in Cassel's more or less resourceful mind then. He left the other three discussing ways and means of catching robbers, walked out and sat down on a log in the darkness and perfected a plan.

The council of three looked up with an air almost of annoyance as Blue Lightning's steel-calked logging-boots clattered over the rough floor. Cassel halted, folded his arms across his chest and began to stare John H. Ancray squarely in the eye.

"Well, tell it!" Ancray snapped impatiently.

"Ef ye could git every cent o' that money back, would ye be willin' not to pussecute the man what took it?" he demanded, his hill drawl level and steady.

Had he known the real nature of the contents of the lavender letter, he would not, of course, have mentioned the consideration! But he didn't know.

Ancray, the sheriff and Persons eyed the tall young logger intently. Persons swallowed hard.

"Yes," Ancray finally said, "I'll be willing. I won't prosecute the man who took my money if he will return it."

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Blue Lightning fished the twelve hundred dollars from inside his blue shirt and put it on the desk. Owl-Eye Persons' face was like a tallow mask now. He went to his feet in a panic, cowardly fear unseating his better judgment, a veritable rat in a corner, and his right hand was on the butt of his murdering automatic. Jim Cassel's eye caught the hip-pocket movement this time, and he sprang like a tiger for the superintendent, gripping his right wrist in a grip as of iron; he shook the stub-nosed pistol free, and it rang against the floor.

"Ye polecat!" he cried. "I tried to save ye, ye polecat, and ye wanted to put a shot into me! Owl-Eye, you shore desarve to be skinned and beat to death with yore own dry hide. Sheriff——"

Quickly he brought out the entire story with all its trimmings, and Persons was ironed. Then John H. Ancray and Jim Cassel took lighted lanterns and rode down to Panther's Hole, where Cassel's convincing statements were made further convincing by the finding of the buried pay-satchel. When they had completed the journey back to camp, Persons had confessed and was claiming liberty on the strength of the promise that Ancray had made to Blue Lightning Jim.

But he didn't get it. He hadn't returned the money.

Ancray made quiet but extensive inquiries among his men early on the following morning, with the result that he called Cassel into the office shortly after breakfast.

"Jim," said he, "I'm told that you've been the guiding light out here all the time. If you want the superintendent's place, you may have it."

"But I cain't read nor write!" moaned Cassel.

"Humph!" grunted John H. Ancray. "The commissary clerk can keep your time-sheets for you. Will you take the job?"

Cassel's eyes had an ambitious look. Would he take the job, the big job? It would be the next best thing on earth to having Jessie. It would give him, at least, an interest in life.

"Much obleeged to ye, Mr. Ancray," he said stoutly. "I'll take it, and ye can shore look out fo' logs."

ANCRAY and the sheriff and the prisoner rode toward the lowland. The crew went to work in the woods, and Blue Lightning Jim sat at the desk that was now his and wished to God he had Jessie. It was almost as if some good genie was at large in his behalf—less than half an hour afterward, Jessie McKibbon walked into the office! She was flushed, disturbed, a little desperate, and her face was as pretty as a wild rose in a mountain morning's dew. For a moment she seemed to be struggling with herself, while she looked pleadingly into Blue Lightning Jim's white, white face. Then she forgot all her small and pitiful subterfuges, flung the lavender letter into his lap and half sobbed out:

"Oh, Jim, I do so hate fo' you to know it, b-b-but I cain't read, and I jest c-c-c-couldn't let anybody else see it. Please read that to me, Jim!"

"Ye cain't read! I cain't neither! Ef ye cain't read, ye cain't write! —— that old letter, Jessie, honey, and come here to me—oh, Lord, Jessie, come here to me!" Cassel cried in a voice that was close to the breaking-point, his two arms outstretched.

When they had set foot on this poor, trouble-ridden earth again, they burned the lavender letter without knowing—or caring—what was in it.

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HELL'S BELL

by T·NICHOLS

Author of "Captain Findlay's Last Voyage."

LIKE sentries at a trench parapet, the two men, the captain and the mate, stood leaning over the weather bulwark on the bridge, peering ineffectually, futilely into the spongy, opaque darkness.

The *Indian Maid*, of Glasgow, was groping her way through the night, blinded by a fog that draped the Atlantic like a hoary, clammy shroud. She heaved herself listlessly at the head-seas, weary of fighting, content to endure. She was isolated in a world of ghostliness; lost, it seemed, in vapors from a caldron of eternal confusion.

"It bothers me yet, sir," said the mate in a low colorless voice, as if talking not of his own volition but impelled by an unseen presence or a goading memory. "We might have done something for the poor fellow. The wind was abating at the time, sir."

"—— easy for you to say so. I chance to have ship and crew to think of."

"Still, sir, it would have been only our duty to try."

Captain Baxter's eyes, hard, domineering, fortified by beetling brows, abandoned momentarily their futile contemplation of the hoary blackness ahead and turned with an angry glare to the dark indistinct figure of the mate. But the challenge in them was avoided. Simmons' face shrank more completely within the protection of oilskins and sou'wester, and his scrutiny of the impenetrable fog became more intent, more rigid.

"We can't afford to be dawdling about in these parts longer than necessary," said the captain harshly. "I suppose you know May isn't the safest time to make Quebec over this route."

"I know, sir," said the mate slowly. "I have thought all along we ought to have gone by the southern route."

"And fed every penny of profit into her furnaces!" The tone, charged with infinite contempt, expressed the intolerance of age toward youth, of the infallible toward the blundering.

The mate was silent.

The *Indian Maid* continued her haphazard progress, wriggling blindly through the fog, lurching from side to side, climbing, burrowing, sliding into gulches, rising again, creaking complainingly. The two men on the bridge leaned over the rail, like grotesque gargoyles perched above the deck, trying to discern what lurked in the opaque darkness of night and fog.

Vainly. Beyond the rising and falling bows and the clouds of pain-crazed foam that lashed them, nothing could be seen. The ship herself seemed to have faded, to have become ethereal. Her outlines were blurred, her lights dimmed, her rigging bearded with drops of water, her mastheads dissolved in mist, stretching into gray unknown distances. She was surrounded and saturated by fog. It seemed to be absorbing her.

"Think I will go below and have a

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bracer, Simmons," said the captain abruptly as he lifted his body from the rail after a long silence. "This infernal fog, coming on top of all the rest, has just about finished me."

"You might turn in awhile, sir," the mate ventured. "I'll call you if anything happens."

A look of grim amusement crept into Baxter's eyes.

"If anything happens, it isn't likely you'll have time to call anybody, my boy—not in this weather."

He stalked into the dimness of the pilot-house, a squat figure, crude and formless in oilskins and sou'wester, and stooped over the glowing dial of the binnacle. In the light his lean face gleamed wet and shiny. Apparently satisfied, his satisfaction indicated by his silence, he crossed the lurching deck and ambled down the starboard companion, leaving behind him an exhilarating air of freedom.

Simmons breathed with the full capacity of his lungs. Unconquerable youth shook off the sinister influence of the captain's personality. His head soared from its entrenchment within his upturned coat collar and again looked upon the world with the mien of a master, unafraid, competent. It was a precious sensation, and, feeling the need of companionship in its brief indulgence, he stuck his head familiarly through the wheel-house door.

"Did you hold her to her course, Tom?" he asked tentatively.

"Aye, sir. The bloomin' ol' pirate didn't catch me that time." Tom shifted his wad of tobacco with extreme deliberation. "Don't know as if I'd have cared if he had, sir. That thing yesterday rather put me out. It flattens my heart just to think o' it, sir."

"I guess that is how we all feel about it, Tom."

"Aye, sir. My opinion is that he had a little too much in his head. It wasn't blowin' hardly at all, sir; not so much but what we could have got at him. Not that I was surprized, sir, the captain thinking of nothing but profits and his bloomin' ol' ship."

The mate glanced apprehensively behind him. This talk was seditious; it indicated impaired discipline among the men. He felt a disquieting sense of guilt. He had debased his position. This outspokenness he, an officer, had encouraged.

"Better not repeat that to anybody else, Tom," he said curtly. "And be sure to keep her to the mark."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Accustomed by a lifetime at sea to the whims of officers, Tom reverted to his quid and his profound meditations upon life as it concerned him and his ethical philosophies.

Hastily withdrawing from the door of the pilot-house, Simmons resumed his post by the weather bulwark, striving with the zeal of repentance to discover what might be in the path of the vessel. His strained immobility gave him the appearance of a sorcerer intent upon impressing his will on the unseen.

The *Indian Maid* blundered on, fumbling to escape the blinding fog-mass. But the fog clung to her, surrounded her like an evil emanation.

CAPTAIN BAXTER reappeared on the bridge, preceded by an indefinable sense of unrest. Without turning, Simmons felt his presence, a blighting presence that sapped his courage and transformed him from a man of authority to a mere valet of a distasteful power.

"All is well, sir," he said.

"So it is; so it is. I compliment you, Simmons."

The reply was querulous, insinuating, insulting. Snail-like the mate's chin disappeared within the confines of his coat collar.

The captain paused momentarily, one hand on the rail. Then he began to pace back and forth across the deck, like a ship beating against the wind. The pale glow from the pilot-house illumined his face as he passed, and the narrow glimmer revealed a heightened flush and eyes shot with red. But his legs were steady; his figure was firmly poised in spite of the eccentric motions of the deck.

"Getting chillier, isn't it?"

He stopped abruptly to look at the thermometer.

"It seems so."

"Better tell the lookout to keep awake."

"I have told him to look sharply, sir."

"All right, all right."

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently and made as if to continue his restless pacing back and forth, but instead he hesitated and with sudden determination took his station

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by the engine-room telegraph, his hand closing firmly about the handle of the annunciator.

The two men grew rigid, became like statues, listening, watching anxiously, struck silent, motionless by danger.

A sound came percolating through the fog, a faint sound, different from the bellow of the waves, the creaking and groaning of the ship, the swish of flying foam—a sound like seas hurling their moist, formless bulk at a rock and sobbing wrathfully at the futility of it. It seemed to come from a great distance or to be issuing half-choked from a dungeon.

Gradually it came nearer.

"Looks like ice to starboard, sir!" The hail came from the crow's-nest in the foremast.

The sound was abeam. Suddenly in the mist a strange dead whiteness appeared to be struggling hopelessly to escape from the soggy darkness. It seemed not a light but the specter of a light, imprisoned, straining to break from its confinement. But the darkness was impenetrable, unconquerable. It paled for a moment, as if in danger of being overpowered, and then, seemingly stirred and angry at its weakness, closed on the straining light, and all was as before.

"Rather close shave that, sir!" the mate exclaimed involuntarily, recovering from the numbness of suspense.

"A quarter-mile or less," muttered the captain. "And that ass in the foremast didn't see it until it was abeam. Fine lot of sailors I have!" And a string of oaths rounded off his remarks.

The *Indian Maid* seemed to have relinquished all hope of finding a path out of the maze—seemed to have capitulated to the fog and the terrors that the fog concealed. She had slowed down to steerage way. She crept, wallowing and groaning, into the darkness, but the movement was a mere formality, a tribute to habit and not an effort toward a goal.

The mate shuddered. The chill from the iceberg had lost none of its piercing quality and none of its pregnant suggestions of what might have happened.

"I can't help thinking, sir," he said gloomily, "that we should have been pretty much in the same boat as that other fellow yesterday if we hadn't been lucky."

"I don't want to hear any more about that, Simmons!" The tone was imperious, menacing. "He probably wasn't in bad shape at all—those Dutchies are too free with their distress signals," he added in a lower tone as if to himself—as if to still some slight uneasiness that betrayed itself when he tried to light his pipe in the face of the wind.

They lapsed into silence again, a silence haunted by disquieting memories.

ANOTHER hail from the mainmast interrupted their dark meditation. Following close upon the iceberg, it was invested with some of the tenseness, the terror, that yet hovered in the atmosphere.

"Bell somewhere ahead, sir!"

Through the haze the lookout could be seen, high in the etherealized foremast, like a gray ghost, waving his arms excitedly.

They listened, leaning far over the weather bulwark, resembling more than ever gargoyles perched above the deck.

Filtering through the night it came to them, low, muffled, metallic, carrying a confused warning out of the fog. It was a bewildering sound. At times the strokes came slowly, regularly, then a fusilade of strokes like a fanfare of hellish glee. The irregularity of it, the unmethodical clanging, hinted at things darkly wrong. It hinted at mystery, tragedy, hidden dangers.

The captain's hand reached upward and pulled a cord. The siren snarled, rumbled, moaned, drowning in the suddenness of its attack all other sound, rose angrily, threateningly, carried a challenge into the heart of the fog and was buried in the night. No answer came. Again the siren spoke loudly, insistently. Again no answer came save the erratic clanging of the bell.

"Damnation!" muttered Baxter in a voice that expressed fear, surprize, bewilderment and defiance.

It was a declaration of helplessness. The wrung-out curse corroborated and nourished the tormenting uneasiness in the mate's breast, oppressed him with a terror as vague and clammy as the fog.

Again the captain's hand clawed at the cord. The siren shrilled menacingly, with sham insolence. The challenge was unheeded; the deep rusty *clang, clang* and the volleys of lighter strokes came back imperturbably, uninterruptedly, carrying a threat of its own, telling of perils concealed in the night and the fog, waiting to dart out

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and overwhelm the ship in its helplessness. The sound seemed not of earth but of a vindictive world of evil.

It crept nearer with infinite deliberation, out of the spongy, shaggy abyss, gained in power, gained in distinctness, gained in horror.

"Maybe it's a derelict, sir." The silence had become unendurable for Simmons; he required an explanation, no matter how wild and improbable, to lift the veil off that inexplicable warning. "That other one was probably not the only one knocked out by the gale."

The captain grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him savagely.

"Did you ever hear a ship's bell like that?" he snarled.

"That irregularity might be caused by the action of the seas, sir."

"Hang the irregularity! But the sound—that infernal sound!"

"It seems rather too deep for a ship's bell. But it can't be anything else. We aren't within three hundred miles of any shoal," he argued with the fervor of desperation.

With a snort of disdain Baxter left the mate to his imaginings and stalked over to the binnacle.

"Swing her over two points to port!" he commanded gruffly.

"Two points to port, aye, aye, sir."

The wheelsman's voice was steady and mechanical, but in the dimness within the pilot-house he could be seen straining forward, listening intently, ready to flee, seemingly unmindful of the impossibility of flight.

The ghastly bell and its insistent reminder of peril swerved slightly to starboard. Simmons felt oddly relieved. The captain's action in changing the course was the creator, the support, of a growing hope that, improbable as it seemed, the thing ahead, the bell intoning that everlasting, hoarse, staccato warning, was tangible, could be avoided, and not the awful voice of a lurking vengeance, inescapable, eternal.

But the relief was transient. Reason, man's greatest aid in combating terror, failed to sustain his hopes. There was no foundation on which to base a plausible theory. According to his reckoning the *Indian Maid* was hundreds of miles from any shoal or coast-line; allowances for adverse wind and waves would increase the margin materially. And uncharted dangers do not spring up overnight in the North Atlantic; bells are not placed without knowledge of shipping.

Reason traitorously deserted him, ranged itself on the side of the inexplicable, proclaimed in panic that ahead, in the fog that pursued the ship, surrounded her, clung to her with avid, hateful affection, was something not of earth.

With despair crowding in on him, he stood by the railing, palsied, staring imbecilely into the darkness where nothing could be seen. His figure was coated with vapors; drops of moisture formed and crawled down his oilskins like worms that grew miraculously.

Clang, clang! Somber, ominous, and then a jumble of strokes, like accompanying hell-laughter.

Each stroke sank into the minds of the listening men; each stroke pounded remorselessly at their hearts, intent on demolishing every vestige of courage. It was as if a malicious demon were tolling funeral bells, their funeral bells, over graves yet unfilled—graves they were destined to fill.

Fate was playing a prank with them, a horrible prank. Like the savage Norsemen of old who fought duels locked in a black room, so the ship and her Nemesis were fighting a duel in the gray blindness of the fog. But this was a duel without rules. Like the hiss of a snake, the ominous strokes and the danger, the vengeance they represented, laid an enervating spell upon the ship.

And then the accompanying hell-laughter —the swifter strokes, the rusty, hoarse jubilation half stifled by the mist.

THE captain had stationed himself by the engine-room telegraph, his hand resting in indicision on the annunciator. He seemed to be struggling with all the power of his uncouth will against the hypnotic voice of the bell. The mate had ceased to struggle. He was filled, dominated by the awful fascination of the unknown before them. With dumb curiosity he wondered what the captain would do, thankful that he himself was called upon to do nothing.

The tension increased. Abruptly, like an automaton with timed movements, the captain raised his hand and jerked the cord

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hanging from the stanchion above his head. Again the siren threatened, shrilled, shrieked with sham courage and defiance.

Clang, clang!

No answer but the harsh irregular strokes.

In the faint sheen from the binnacle Baxter's face looked ludicrously puzzled. His features twitched. He was ghastly pale, colorless except for the red in his eyes.

"Better call all hands." The words seemed forced from him by ages of torture.

Simmons, himself in an inquisition of dread, cupped his hands and in a voice that fell weak and tremulous on the noise-clogged darkness shouted—

"Call the watch below, Jim!"

A figure no more than a dim outline, unreal and unsubstantial as a conventional ghost, detached himself mystically from the windlass on the forecastle head, glided unsteadily across the deck and down a ladder and disappeared on his mission into the crew's quarters.

Presently they began to appear, uncouth men in oilskins, growing out of the darkness, darker than the darkness, solidifying, dissolving, as they passed to and fro in the steaming atmosphere. A light, a lantern, a glaring center with an aura of feeble whiteness, moved about the deck trailing a pair of enormous sea-boots that supported and guided the shadowy apparition of the boatswain.

"Stand by with the lead!"

"Stand by with the lead, aye, aye, sir!"

The enormous sea-boots, supporting their formless superstructure and accompanied by the light, retreated into the storehouse forward but reappeared in a moment and followed by satellite shadows ambled over to starboard.

"All right, heave!" Captain Baxter's voice was calm.

The boatswain swung one arm over the side; the lead descended to the end of the line and was hauled in swiftly.

"No bottom, sir!"

It caused no surprize. It corroborated every argument of reason. They were three hundred miles or more from the Newfoundland shoals. There were thousands of feet of water under the ship. And this unassailable corroboration of reason strengthened the awful dread that the fiendish clamor that greeted them out of the mist was not of earth but the herald of a higher, inexorable judgment.

Unnoticed, Hopkins, the second mate, had joined the two on the bridge. He stopped as if halted by a command in the shelter of the wheel-house and listened incredulously, overwhelmed by the impossibility of his hearing, outside of dreams, such a sound in such a place.

"What hell-noise is that?" he gasped finally.

Nobody answered. Nobody knew.

"Try the lead again, Bo's'n!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The enormous sea-boots shuffled about in the faint white aura of the lantern. The arm swung out as before. There was a moment of suspense as the lead shot down into the sea.

"Nothing, sir."

One by one, indistinct figures detached themselves from the group about the boatswain and struggled aft to appear a few moments later on the bridge. Instinctively they gathered about the officers, looking to them, like frightened sheep, for safety and guidance. There was a hushed silence over the men, a silence of terrible wonder, of wild conjecture, of dreadful forebodings. Suddenly through the fog-wall to starboard came a sharp report like the firing of a cannon, dulled by distance, trailed by a rumble and a deep roar.

The group on the bridge started convulsively, their eyes turned toward the sound, horribly expectant, waiting for a shell to plunge through the darkness and blow them into eternity.

But nothing happened. They drew a breath of intense relief, of joy. Only ice. A berg breaking under the strain of the waves. A danger, but a tangible, avoidable one.

The *Indian Maid* wallowed onward, slowly, cautiously creeping toward the ambush laid for her. She seemed under a spell, drawn by a hypnotic power into the jaws of destruction.

Clang, clang!

Slowly and somberly came the persistent warning followed by volleys of strokes, like hell-laughter.

It approached the unendurable. Each stroke was an accusation and a doom. Each stroke tore at their hearts, lopped years off their tenure of life. They cringed,

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supine, before the unseen in the fog. As if in sympathy with the anguish of their hardened souls, drops of moisture formed and coursed like tears down their faces, their clothing.

"——!" some one gulped. "It's 'im come back to haunt us!"

Captain Baxter glanced furiously at the group of sailors but said nothing. Wild, ridiculous as the idea was, it could not be disproved. That infernal tolling in that spongy, dripping atmosphere teemed with fantastic suggestions. The very crash and seething of the waves appeared hushed by enigmatic presences.

"Give a heave of the lead again, Bo's'n!" The voice was calm, but its calmness was disturbing.

The enormous sea-boots in the aura of light and the huge shadow above them performed their grotesque rites by the bulwark in obedience to the command.

"Nothing, sir."

It was maddening. A seen danger, however near, would have been joy. But this danger was not seen. Where was it, facing them or surrounding them? It might be anywhere in that blind maze of vapors. Would it meet them and crush them, or would it suddenly, noiselessly suck the ship down to perdition?

Either it was of earth or it was not of earth. Either it could be avoided or it could not be avoided. Racked by suspense, the crew waited, glancing stealthily at the captain with dumb appeal in their glances. His power was absolute as never before. He whom they believed the cause of it all was their only leader. They looked to him resentfully but obediently for salvation. Their souls abhorred him, but their minds, struck with panic, trusted him.

He stood motionless, a statue of inflexibility and truculence. He looked grim and defiant, but the fingers that clutched the handle of the engine-room telegraph moved restlessly, as if the metal scorched them.

THE altered course brought the bell more and more to starboard, but nevertheless, as the ship crept through the fog, it came nearer, terrifyingly nearer—nearer—nearer——

Soon the hour of decision would be past.

The men watched the captain with agonized absorption. His eyes had sunk deeper under the jutting eyebrows; there was moisture on his forehead not due to the clinging mist.

Suddenly he looked wildly about him, as if his will had cracked under the strain.

"I can't risk it—my ship!" he groaned.

He jerked the annunciator violently, back and forth, with the impatience of terror.

For a moment the engines stopped altogether, as in consternation. The ship ceased to crawl. Then the pounding below recommenced with astounding vigor; the churning of the screw sweeping toward the bow instead of the wake and the diminished power of the seas tumbling over the stem showed that she was backing.

She backed slowly at first, cautiously, then faster and faster, as if abandoning herself to fear and scrambling with the speed of desperation from the nameless peril in the fog. She seemed a living thing with human emotions, human dread of the supernatural, human love of life. She leaped backward into the darkness whence she had come, where she knew safety lay.

The cluster of men on the bridge waited, breathless with suspense, watching anxiously the mist beyond the bows for some fantastic, merciless force to dart out and prevent their escape.

But nothing happened. The flight was uninterrupted. No hand of vengeance shot out of the fog to crush them. The fog closed on their retreat and left no trace. The deep angry bell-strokes sagged into the distance, lost in power, died into a rumble. The crew began to feel the luxury of relief.

Simmons, like a man awakening from a nightmarish dream, shook off the influence of the weird sound in the fog, breathed a prayer and, with the sensation of a prisoner at the moment of release, gazed upon the seas reeling by with drunken roars and exulted at the speed of the ship as she plunged back into the night, away from destruction.

He was about to speak in his usual deferential manner. But the words stuck in his mouth. A new fear seized him. Involuntarily he grasped the captain's arm.

"The iceberg!" he whispered hoarsely.

Baxter glared at him uncomprehendingly, in a daze.

"The altered course— We are backing into it!"

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Slowly the captain turned. With that quick perception that unites men in peril, the sailors had already faced about.

"Gawd!" a voice cried, appalled.

Behind them a vast pale cloud was gathering shape. It seemed to form out of the night, a solidification of the night, its base resting on the water and washed by breakers. It rushed upon the ship like a tornado.

"My ship, my ship!" moaned the captain.

The men were dumb, paralyzed by this immense undefined thing that rose above them.

There was a crunching sound as the rudder ground to pieces, then a crash and a shock that hurled every man to the deck and lifted the ship inches out of the water.

"To the boats!" roared Hopkins, the second mate, scrambling to his feet.

But, before any of the hastily fitted boats touched the water, there came a terrific crack, like an earthquake. The men stopped, looked up in the throes of doomsday. The gray precipice above the stern was descending, as if it had been blasted, a thunderous irresistible mass like a dammed up cataract. With a wild angry crash the avalanche of ice hit the poop and the after deck. The bow of the vessel jumped convulsively into the air; sheaves and pillars of foam rose about her. Splintered fragments of ice leaped from the deep, toppling and plunging. Then, as the berg heeled over, the ship was flung violently on her side.

Simmons felt himself lifted and hurled into space by what seemed a tremendous aerial power. As volitionless as a cannonball he shot into the fog, in the swiftness of events forgetting his terrors, only wondering imbecilely what would become of him.

Suddenly he felt cold, penetratingly cold. All noises were cut off, save a surging, seething. He realized he was in the water, plunging downward immeasurable distances. Still he felt no fear, only astonishment and dull wonder.

He felt himself rising again, soaring upward through oceans of water. It seemed strange and incongruous. It was as if some world-mother were tenderly lifting him up, back into life. And he did not care.

Cold restless air struck his face, filtered into his lungs. Weird noises struck his ears, the rumble of the seas, the grating of the ice floes.

Mechanically he began to swim. He swam cautiously, looking about, seeking something, he did not know what. His instincts were awake; his reason was paralyzed.

The search was exhaustive. The sea was glutted with objects: pieces of ice, fragments of wreckage. But he sought none of these.

Finally a familiarly shaped thing bobbed up before him. It was pale as a piece of ice but was strangely symmetrical, had fine curved outlines.

Apprehensively he raised a hand and touched it. It did not sting like ice. It had a smooth, even surface. An electric shock went through him. With feverish haste he grabbed hold of the upper edge of the thing, fearing it might be but a dream and might disappear. With a firm grip on it he dared to believe what he had known since he first saw it. It was a boat.

He lifted himself with infinite care. He had a horrible fear that his weight might cause the boat to overturn and leave him to struggle in the water forever.

But the boat did not overturn. It seemed remarkably steady. It felt as if it were ballasted—as if an anchor were holding it firmly by the head. It was a phenomenon. It puzzled and disturbed his benumbed intellect.

He crawled forward, clinging desperately to the thwarts. The boat was empty, not an oar, not a loose board, only a few inches of water rushing back and forth agitatedly.

The ballast remained invisible. It troubled him insufferably.

Then he seemed to hear a whisper, a faint voice calling from the bow. He was immensely surprized. It seemed so long since he had heard a voice; ages had passed, death and resurrection. He had forgotten he was not alone in the world.

Again he searched the boat minutely, in a passion to solve the mystery, leaving not an inch unexplored. Baffled, he leaned over the bow.

DIMLY he saw a head floating on the water, a head with distorted features but with familiar contour, and a hand clutching the gunwale by his side.

"That you, Tom?" he said hoarsely.

"Aye, sir!"

"Why don't you climb in?"

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"Can't, sir. Bad knock in the head, and t'other arm's broke."

"I'll give you a lift."

"'Tain't no use. We're done for, sir, all o' us. I've knowed it ever since we spoke that Dutchman. 'Tain't Christian to leave drowning men here, sir."

Some of the fatalism of the remark entered Simmons' soul. He seemed to see the inevitability of it. He said nothing.

"I'm going, sir." The voice was almost inaudible.

Simmons roused himself with panicky energy.

"Wait, Tom!" he cried in consternation and grabbed the slipping fingers.

But the task was incredibly heavy, or his body incredibly weak. Gradually Tom's face slipped under, chin, mouth, nose, eyes.

The fingers grew cold and stiff.

Simmons' dazed mind could not understand it. He stood there, tugging at the stiffened arm, battling with the reality of death. Then over the sea, through the nearer tumult of ice and waves, seemed to come the faint jubilant tolling of a bell, so faint that it might have been imagination.

His body grew suddenly limp and nerveless. His grip on the dead arm unlocked itself. All his former terror came back. The bell seemed to demand of him that, as the others had died, so he, too, must die. And in horror of death and that stupendous thing that comes after death, immortality, he let out a choked animal cry and, sobbing a dry sob, threw himself, fainting, in the bottom of the boat.

He entered oblivion. Like a mantle blown off by the wind, dread, life, death, immortality had slipped away, leaving nothingness.

This peace appeared so blissful, so desirable, that it was with resentment and rage he found himself regaining consciousness. He did not wish to wake. He fought against it. But an inexorable eye seemed fixed on his back, and saw-edged chisels seemed prying his eyelids apart. With dull resignation he raised his head and looked up into the morning.

The world was miraculously changed. The darkness had gone; the sun was well over the earth; the fog had vanished like a dream. Above, the sky stretched blue and cloudless from horizon to horizon, and beneath, bluer still, the ocean paraded in great swells from endlessness to endlessness.

And in the midst of the sea the iceberg reared itself, cathedral-like in barbaric splendor, toward the azure of the sky, like a temple in the loneliness, for the loneliness, a pile of Gargantuan proportions, of fantastic architecture, with fluted pillars and gilded pinnacles. It seemed built of purest basalt and tinted with soft, mellow, harmonious colors: pearl-gray, ruby red, sapphire blue, emerald green. The morning sun shone on its many towers, endowing them with a delicate radiance, unearthly, ethereal. It was a vision of brittle, fairylike beauty.

And the immense stillness was broken only by the slap, slap of the sea against the temple's base.

To Simmons it seemed like a dream. This was a strange world, a world of which he had no recollections, that possessed no memories. He glared stupidly at the sea, at the sky, at the iceberg that hovered there, crowned in awful peace. Still no understanding. All within his vision was a tremendous riddle. He seemed born anew into an incomprehensible existence.

FROM afar, over the horizon, came the slow tolling of a bell, subdued, pensive, in a monotony of weariness.

Simmons leaned forward. Every muscle in his body grew taut. The murmur of the bell in the distance turned the key to his consciousness. Memories tumbled out of his mind, abnormally vivid, terrifyingly recent, fluttered about in confusion, finally passing before him in a ghastly procession: the night, the fog and at last the swift inevitable destruction.

He shuddered and groaned aloud. He began to doubt his very existence. It seemed an impossibility that he was alive, that he should be allowed to live. Might he not be a ghost, condemned to stay in this weird loneliness, in a hell of memories, while that bell beyond the horizon tolled off the minutes, the hours of eternity?

The riot of his thoughts, of his conjectures, caused a dull tense pain in his head. It suddenly occurred to him that, if he could not curb his mind, his brain would blow up like a boiler without a safety-valve. To forestall this calamity, he clapped his hands to his temples, at the same time forcing his thumbs into his ears, hoping to shut out the horrible bell. In this, however, he did not succeed. His hearing seemed

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abnormally acute. Not a stroke did he miss. But he dared not remove his hands for fear of the explosion which might follow.

He sat there immovable, like a statue of despair, while the bell pounded time to pieces, pounded his brain to pieces, and the sun rose higher in the sky.

Then suddenly, unaccountably, the bell ceased. He thought he must surely have died; he must have died sitting there with his hands pressed to his temples. His body still sat there, apparently conscious, for his head ached, a fact which did not harmonize with his previous conception of death. Maybe he was not dead yet. Maybe life was just slipping away from him. He was alarmed.

His eyes wandered toward the distance, eager for a last glimpse of the temporal. What he saw startled him. Balancing on the rim of the horizon was a white-painted steamer, hove to but with smoke belching from her funnel. Her derrick was swung out; he heard the faint clatter of her winches, and a black, indistinguishable object rose high in the air and descended on the steamer's deck. Then she began to move, leaving a trail of black smoke.

Simmons felt an odd tightening of his throat. The steamer was a symbol of life. It recalled to him all the pleasures, the joys, that had been his, that might be his. The sense of loss was overpowering. With an involuntary effort he stripped off his coat and, rising, balanced himself precariously on the seat, swinging the garment crazily, emitting hoarse staccato shrieks.

What seemed an eternity followed. The steamer crawled on its way. Despairing, Simmons threw himself down in the stern of the boat and began to paddle frantically with his hands. In a fury of rage, he wanted to overtake the ship, to annihilate her for her determination to leave him.

The steamer turned slowly, pointing her bow toward him.

His rage changed to fear, fear that she might not reach him in time to save him from death. In a chill of dread he rose to his knees and, stretching his trembling arms to heaven, prayed for salvation.

The ship came to a stop and lowered a boat. Feverish with excitement, he watched it approach with calm, choppy oar-strokes that he could neither understand nor forgive. He thought they ought to know the urgency of his need.

The boats touched, and Simmons threw himself headlong into the other, landing in a heap among the feet of the sailors.

"Save me!" he wailed. "I am dying! I am dead!"

And he shook with sobs.

They pacified him, rolled him in a blanket. Whimpering and hugging the feet of the sailor nearest him, he felt himself borne toward the steamer. The gurgle of the water parting before the bow of the boat came to him like a soothing lullaby.

Half climbing, half carried, he ascended a ladder and of a sudden felt the safety, the substantiality, of a deck beneath his feet. It was a bracing sensation. His legs seemed marvelously strengthened; the confusion in his brain cleared a little. He was able to judge and draw conclusions from former experiences.

He knew he was aboard a Government vessel; the uniformed sailors, the shining brass, the general orderliness told him. Everything was in its place. Everything except a curious object that occupied the middle of the afterdeck. He knew it did not belong there. It consisted of two iron balls, one immense, the other smaller, fastened together by steel stanchions. To the larger was attached a piece of rusty chain.

"What's that?" he said with an effort to think, to remember.

"Oh, that's a bell-buoy," some one said. "Got adrift in a storm a while back."

Deep down in Simmons' subconsciousness a doubt began to gather. He seemed to tremble on the brink of a momentous, far-reaching discovery. A question forced itself from him, slowly, hesitatingly—

"How—did—you—get—it?"

"We just picked it up," he was told. "We were out hunting for it."

They asked him questions about his ship, hurried him amidships into a cabin, fed him milk and put him to bed. He submitted dumbly. Then they left him to rest. But he could not rest. The doubt would not let him rest. And it was a ridiculous doubt. It was impossible. And yet he felt he must disprove it thoroughly to his own satisfaction. He could not rest otherwise; he could not sleep.

Cautiously he crawled out the door and sneaked down on the after deck. Nobody was about. He chuckled a little at his luck. He went up to the buoy and tried

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to shake it. It could not be budged. Temporarily baffled but more determined than ever to kill the doubt by a practical, conclusive demonstration, he hurried back to the cabin amidships.

A FEW minutes later the crew of the *Falcon*, of the Lighthouse Inspection Service, were startled by the heavy clanging of a bell. Their drill on the foredeck came to a halt. It was not the clanging of an ordinary bell. The sound was erratic, bewildering. First the strokes came slowly, regularly; then followed a fusillade of strokes, like metallic laughter.

In surprize they scanned the sea. The great swells paraded endlessly from horizon to horizon. To leeward the iceberg reared itself, cathedral-like, with haze about its base and the sun gilding its many towers and pinnacles.

The clanging continued, wild, erratic. They ran aft.

A grotesque sight met them. Down on the deck, by the bell-buoy, Simmons sat, barefooted, clad only in a nightdress. In his right hand was a brass door-knob, and with this he hammered with all his might the smaller of the two metal balls that formed the buoy.

He did not see them. His face was fixed and wore an expression of pained concentration. He seemed to be listening to some sound no one could hear, no one but he.

Listening and comparing.

And then he laughed, a high cracked laughter, the laughter of a man disillusioned and foiled by life, robbed of the essentials of his being and played with in his tragedy. A man who had been the sport and prey of a monstrous, mirthful Providence.

FREIGHTERS

By EDMUND LEAMY

WHENEVER I wake in the morning
And the smell of the sea is strong,
My heart becomes filled with yearning
As my soul becomes filled with song,
And it's all I can do to prevent me
Going down to the docks right away
And boarding the very first freighter,
The very first salt-spattered freighter,
That's sailing for ports far to eastward
And is heading for down the bay.

Now, passenger ships are like ladies,
And timid they be with fears;
They know not the wander spirit
As they lie at their painted piers,
And like ladies they stick to the fair ways
Where never a buccaneer trod,
But any old salt-spattered freighter,
Oh, any old-time-honored freighter,
Will sail to the uncharted islands
And steer by its trust in God.

So whenever I wake in the morning
And the lure of the sea is there,
It's adventure that calls me, calls me,
And never was call so fair,
And it's all I can do to prevent me
Going down to the docks right away
And boarding the very first freighter,
The very first dream-laden freighter,
That's headed for fathomless oceans
Down the path of the dawning day!

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The CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS, WRITERS and ADVENTURERS

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance: many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

CACTUS, diphtheria, Gila Monsters and candy—a word about them all:

San Francisco.

Re diphtheria and cutting the throat. Tell Mr. Hurst not to be too sure they could not breathe through the cut. While in Central America I helped operate on a native that had been in a Saturday-night free-for-all. He had a bullet-hole in him and several knife-cuts, one of them in chest. We had him on the operating-table but could not put him out until one of the boys moistened his hand and clamped it over the knife-cut in his chest.

There were no nurses at hand so we tramps helped the M.D. on his Sunday work, which consists of gun-shot wounds and knife-cuts.

One other case, same place. The Mine Judge's son and another native undertook to show each other who had the most Dutch courage. Result, Judge's son badly cut in neck, wind-pipe nearly cut off, etc., but missed the vein. Other native shot through liver, died. Our doctor saved the Judge's son.

RE GILA MONSTERS. McLaren has color and set OK. They can eat cyanide, etc., also can take a beating with a club that should break every bone in their bodies, and still walk off. Any of you travelers that want to see one, when you land in Frisco go to Third Street, between Mission and Howard. There you will find a Medico at one of the side street corners selling a cure-you-all for a dollar. He has one to get the crowd, and that fellow that was going to send you a skin, well if he does and I ever meet him I'll buy him a drink. The only way to skin a Gila Monster is to pound him to a hamburger and open up and cut and scrape the meat from the skin piece by piece. He is sure a "one-piece combination."

RE the cactus. The one that the Indians and we desert rats (prospectors) chew when we get out of water is called a barrel cactus and is from two to three feet high. I never saw one over three feet high. Its thorns are somewhat flat and curved like a hook. Whereas the one he describes grows to over twenty feet high and has straight round thorns or spines. The barrel cactus is almost all water and is not bitter to taste.

A candy and ice-cream parlor in Phœnix has built up a good business out of cactus candy made from the barrel cactus, cut in squares the size of caramels and sugar sirup cooked.

I too know Cave Creek and the Black Cañon, having "footed" it from Meyer to Phoenix.—G. HOYT.

SOMETIMES it takes a good while, owing to lack of space, for a question asked at Camp-Fire to get its answer in print, but it's seldom indeed that at least

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one answer doesn't come in and eventually find its way into our columns. Here, for example, is a reply on the ancient walled cities of Zululand—to me, at least, a fascinating subject:

Oakwood, Mich.

L. V. Roberts, Jr., has asked for information about the mysterious walled cities of Zululand. His question was addressed particularly to actual visitors of that region—in which respect I can not qualify; but having conducted in my own interest a "fireside exploration" which revealed answers to most of his questions, I take the liberty of offering results. Sources of information were old magazines—"Wide World," "Scientific American Supplement," "Golden Argosy" and others, and "Encyclopedia Britannica." To plunder the latter treasure-house an "open sesame" is needed; in this case the key words are *Zimbabwe*, *Rhodesia* (*Archaeology*), *Monotapa Solomon*, *Ophir*, *Africa* (*Roman*). As all this involves extensive research, I present a summary:

ZIMBABWE is a Bantu name, meaning "stone house," used as a generic term for the capital of a chief. The Great Zimbabwe, to which modern usage has affixed the name, is situated in southern Rhodesia, near Victoria, Mashonaland. Discovered in 1868 by Adam Renders; explored by Karl Mauch in 1871; stripped of its romance by D. Randall-MacIver's explorations (1905), which apparently proved the ruins to be the work of Bantus, and established their date as not earlier than 14th or 15th century A. D. The "Elliptical Temple" is an irregular enclosure over 800 feet in circumference; wall in places 30 feet high and 14 feet thick; construction uneven and contour erratic. The "Acropolis" is a high hill, fortified with a completeness and judgment betokening military genius. The "Valley Ruins" appear to have been a trading mart, or abode of visiting merchants who exchanged their goods for gold dust.

Similar ruins are the Inyanga and Niekerk groups, about 250 miles northeast of Zimbabwe. The inhabitants of these northern regions evidently devoted their energies more to agriculture than to gold-seeking, as there are traces of an extensive and well planned irrigation system. The ruins consist of smaller units than those in the south, but their extent is enormous, the Niekerk Zimbabwe covering an area of 50 *square miles*. So much for the archeological evidence—now for the historical.

DUTCH and Portuguese maps, A. D. 1500-1700, designate what is now Rhodesia as the "Kingdom of the Monomotapa." Extent and boundaries appear indefinite, but all accounts of the Portuguese chroniclers agree that the kingdom was large and populous. The Monomotapa, or "Lord of the Water Elephants," seems to have been a sort of emperor under whom ruled numerous petty kings and underlords called *inkosis*. In the dispute with England as to ownership of Delagoa Bay the Portuguese based their claims on a cession by the Monomotapa (1629), whose dominions they declare extended southward *nearly to the Cape of Good Hope!* Stories of a ruling caste of a different race (Arabic strain) are set at rest by Dominican baptismal records, which state that the "powerful king" was a black man. The light complexion of the southern Zulus, who displaced the black aborigines, probably furnished foundation for the rumor.

HOWEVER, it is a historial fact that this progressive race (Bantu), themselves non-seafaring, for centuries carried on trade with merchants who brought goods from the sea-coast. If their knowledge of government, of military tactics and irrigation, and their crude but ambitious building operations, are surprising in an African people, how better account for it than by ascribing it to commercial intercourse with superior races. As to whether the fleets of King Solomon might have secured their ladings of "gold and sandalwood, ivory, apes and peacocks" from the kingdom of the Monomotapa, *vide* Herodotus, who derided the claims of Phenician navigators (600 B. C.) that he had sailed around the southern end of Africa, because they said the sun (in southern solstice) was on their right hand—an obvious impossibility according to the Greek historian. But this same assertion is now taken as proof of truthfulness, since no Phenician of that day could invent a *lie* like that.

Those emissaries of Necho, king of Egypt, were nearly three years on their journey, halting from time to time to reap crops and otherwise forage. It has been suggested that King Necho might have learned of the great sea to the west (Atlantic) from the gold miners of the "water elephant's" realm. The time required for a voyage of Solomon's fleets does not necessarily indicate a more remote "Ophir" than the "Afura" of Rhodesia. Perhaps they, too, stopped off at various places, and possibly they sent expeditions into the interior after peacocks and apes and precious woods. The ivory and fine gold certainly could have been obtained at Zimbabwe. Britannica says several of the ancient gold workings have been rediscovered and are now being operated "with profit."

ABOUT 14 years ago, one explorer (name forgotten by writer) discovered and investigated "King Solomon's Mines," somewhere in Rhodesia. He found remains of buildings showing evidences of civilized handiwork; also objects connected with worship of the "strange gods" of Solomon's latter days. Also, the crucibles of the workers in gold! These crucibles or furnaces, he found, could be peeled off in layers, revealing splashes of gold underneath. The ancient workers, instead of flaking off the precious metal that spilled, had simply smoothed on another layer of cement *whenever the accumulation became excessive*. The account of this discovery appeared in *Wide World Magazine* some time between the years 1905-1912, as I remember, those copies having passed out of my keeping.

In closing, I would suggest that the origin of the name, *Africa* is still open to debate. Ancient maps give it variously as Afer (?), Afur, Afura—the last named form being still attached to the region south of Zimbabwe. Compare with the Biblical Ophir—and draw your own conclusions.

Fiction: "King Solomon's Mines," "She," and other works of H. Rider Haggard; "The White Shield," and "The King's Assegai," by Bertram Mitford.—W. E. KEEVER.

IN CONNECTION with his story in this issue you'll be interested in a letter from Thomas McMorrow, who served in

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the 53rd Pioneer Infantry. When we took the story we were a bit worried over the difficulty of soldier slang for the uninitiated. Of course all who have been in the Army will find it easy going, as will some who have not, and we've an idea the others will get the meaning of most of it and will have a good time with the tale even if a word here and there is a bit obscure.

New York.

Just landed here from Upton—discharge dated May fourteenth. On the back it says St. Mihiel, Argonne, Meuse.

I was Provost Sergeant in Chablis from January fifth, when we came down from the Argonne, till April sixth, when we started for Brest. That yarn about *Scallan* the merchant was written in ouf guard-house in snatches after Taps, while my merry men were starting the nightly crap game and lifting the roof with "Silver Threads Among the Gold," and leaning over my shoulder with "Getting out tomorrow's schedule, Sarge? Hey, put me down to take care of the Lion d'Or!"

Soldier slang? Imagine trying to write classic English! Say, I can see our buddies around the Camp-Fire grinning right now at the idea that they don't compree the chatter of the A. E. F.!

YES, some outfits took barrack bags to France. We didn't] ourselves, but the bags were there, lots of them. The earlier outfits brought them, I think so. I remember a heap of them lying in a barracks near Les Islettes, and the original of *Scallan* the merchant picking a couple out for his own peculiar purposes. On the level, I haven't overdrawn him a bit—he was one industrious boy, as bold as he was thrifty. He was an acrobat and tumbler by trade. And in the front areas you could carry about anything you had the legs to tote, unless actually going into the lines. My pack consisted of a shelter-half and a blanket, and then as much grub as I could lay hold of. I met one sergeant of Engineers who had no pack at all. "You freeze at night," I said. "I do," he said. "But I'm comfortable in the daytime!"

Well, I tried to give you a yarn from the viewpoint of the doughboy—the grumbling, singing, sinful, soft-hearted kid from the U. S. A. He didn't believe in heroes. He wasn't one himself, and he could lick any guy that claimed to be one—and he Won the War!—Thos. McMorrow.

NO, COMRADE MILLS, once in a while we print letters in praise of *Adventure*, but not very often, and I don't believe we do much blowing ourselves. Yet sometimes a letter like your own seems to come under the head of legitimate information about our magazine and we pass it on to everybody concerned.

Mr. Mills, one of our "Ask Adventure" staff, is editor of the *Feilding Star* in New Zealand.

Feilding, New Zealand.

I have noticed that in the course of my reading of your magazine you are somewhat different. You do not boast *Adventure*. You must have much material with which to do the boasting, for during the short time that I have been one of your "AA" editors I have received words of praise concerning *Adventure!* As an "AA" staffsman, too, I have had much evidence of the cosmopolitanism of your magazine and its world-wide circulation. The latest proof in this direction was furnished only last week:

NEW ZEALAND, like the rest of the world, is in the throes of the influenza epidemic. In this little town where I reside there were calls for volunteers to help the helpless in houses and two temporary hospitals. Two of my daughters answered to the call. One day the younger girl reported to me on her return home at night that amongst the reading matter brought in by the town clerk for those patients who were well enough to read were two copies of *Adventure*. I made a call myself at that hospital two days later (as a newspaper man) and whilst talking to the matron I saw a bundle of books and magazines handed in. In the bundle was a copy of *Adventure*. And this in a country town in New Zealand, the farthest outland on this footstool!

I SHOULD like to add a little about other evidence of the circulation of your magazine. It is just over twelve months since I began to receive "AA" queries concerning New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. To date I have received seventy letters containing about seven times seventy questions. As I intimated in a previous letter to you on this subject, the letters have come from all parts of your own United States. But I have actually received "AA" letters from New Zealand, a town not three hundred miles from my own place of residence. I have discovered for a man in U. S. A. a long-lost chum in New Zealand who actually happens to be an old friend of my own. I have had two "AA" letters from away in the interior of Australia; from the far north region of Canada; from Alaska; from a suburb of Melbourne, Australia; from Assiniboia, Sask.; from Tampico, Mexico; from away up in the highlands of Peru; from the hills region of India; from Havana; from Rezal, Philippines; and from China.

AND some of the letters have discovered for me some highly interesting correspondents, whose gratitude from answers given has prompted them to send me entertaining and worthwhile letters of acknowledgment, so that it has been a genuine pleasure to keep up a correspondence. Busy as my life is—for who, outside of the woman who does her own housework, is busier than a working journalist on a country paper?—I have welcomed these "AA" acquaintances and find these adventurers and would-be adventurers very likable fellows.—Tom L. Mills.

P. S.—So the war is over! Here's congratulations and thanks to the Americans. Christmas and New Year are with you—here's wishing you all of the *Adventure* health and prosperity throughout 1919!

The above letter was written December 2, 1918, and reached us some time well along in January. Here is a bit from an earlier letter:

I have had a number of reminders of the watchfulness of your censor department—with no verdict

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against me yet. But right here and in this connection I desire to point out the value of your duplicating of replies system. I have under my hand at this writing replies to S. B. Pelton, Smethport, and Jos. P. Lawrence, Bridgeport, both "passed by the military censor," one returned to me marked "Unknown" and the other "Unclaimed." These two casuals owe myself and *Adventure* an apology for dodging the issue.

With regards and best wishes, *Kia Ora!*—Tom. L. Mills.

Comrades Pelton and Lawrence needn't do any apologizing to the magazine, though possibly they might have saved needless trouble by more care in giving their addresses, but they can get their replies by giving correct—and sure—addresses to Mr. Mills.

I HAVEN'T talked much about our "Ask Adventure" department since it got under way but I can summarize by saying that its practical accomplishment has been splendid and it certainly is established as a permanent feature of our magazine. A number of its editors have gone into the war, which has made some delays and changes, but the department's service has been even better than we hoped.

One phase of it may by some be overlooked. It isn't just a bureau for satisfying idle curiosity. Most of the questions asked are asked for practical purposes and a goodly portion of the answers become decisive factors in the lives of the inquirers. For example, there are quite a few who, with their families, have found new homes and new opportunities through our "Ask Adventure" and very cheerfully give it credit. From the answers printed in each issue you can judge for yourself the important part "Ask Adventure" plays in a good many lives.

WHO will give this comrade the title and words of the song he heard in Tampico?

At Sea.

By a recent edition you were successful in obtaining the words of a tropical recitation for a Camp-Fire comrade, so I am seeking your assistance.

I was struck with a monologue that I heard a few days ago in Tampico, Mexico. The reciter was a Tropical Tramp and vanished after the recitation, so I was unable to get the words. Therefore I appeal to Camp-Fire. The few lines that I recollect are:

"Do you know the road to Chile and the run to Panama?"

"I'll go back to my blue-eyed Saxon girl."

"You'can holler 'Gringo——' till your voice grows hoarse."

Please excuse shaking writing, *porque*, I am only half-way 'tween Vera Cruz and New Orleans and the ship has a movement of her own.

I will make for New York after I get to N. O., and my address there will be 355 West 19th Street, New York.

Hoping I get my song, and good luck to Camp-Fire.—James Creaney.

IT IS just as well to be clear-eyed in reading the news that is daily fed to us. For example, an article of several columns in the New York *Times*, of whose contents the heading gives the meat:

America Was Ready to Win Victory with Artillery, Rifles and Ammunition; The Record of Production; How the War Plants, with a Late Start, Sped Up to the Front of the Race.

All very fine. But the main head-line of the article, though it generally does not happen so in such cases, bursts the bubble by giving the central truth of the whole matter:

OUTGUNNED WORLD WHEN WAR ENDED

When the war ended! Exactly. The richest and greatest country in the world was able to take her full share in winning the war—after the war had been won.

AS A people we Americans generally think very, very well of ourselves, but let us apply our self-conceit with some judgment. Let us swell with just pride over the magnificent way our boys did their part when they got the chance, or half a chance. But let us remember not only how long the United States took to realize it *could* not keep out of the war, and, worse still, how very long it took us to get really into it after we began trying. To put the matter unpopularly, we were caught like a big, rich, soft booby with his mouth hanging open—suddenly confronted with the need to play a man's part without experience, training or the necessary tools.

AND now the Wilson-Baker Administration is feeding the newspapers with pap about what a lot we'd have been able to do, in spite of unpreparedness, if only everything hadn't been all over before we were fully ready. All through the war we had to listen to sugar-coated publicity about how quickly and nobly, under the unprepared Administration, we were doing the things that should have been already done. If a man refuses to go some place at the right

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time it's small credit to him that he moves quickly and nobly when a forest fire drives him there.

Quickly! Quickly enough to be ready when it was all over.

Who can measure the blood and property that would have been saved to the world if this country had been able to enter the war at anything like full strength? And who is responsible for that bloody cost? For the American blood shed through lack of preparation? The nation as a whole, perhaps, but certainly most of that bloody responsibility rests forever upon the Wilson-Baker Administration. The same Administration concerning whose after-the-war war preparations we are now supposed to read with pride and admiration.

THE propagandists are trying to get us all ready to make the same mistake again. Back to Unpreparedness! Back to the National Guard system, exploded by the actual test. Readiness for the country's defense is not a part of a citizen's duty; let's hire a few people to attend to it and then not train or equip them for the job. There won't be any more war. And all the rest of the foolish stuff.

A league of nations by all means, if we can have one that really lessens the chances of more war. But preferably not an unopen one unopenly arrived at, drawn up by a few autocrats bickering and bargaining among themselves behind closed doors. Good in that it is a first step along the new road, but certainly no such guarantee against future war as would warrant our being again caught unprepared.

So when we read the "news" let's sift out what is facts from what was given being by those whose eyes are on the next election, whether they be Administration politicians or the politicians who are opposed to them. *We must think for ourselves.*

YES, there's very often a good deal of fact back of our magazine's fiction stories. Here's a case in point:

Chicago.

The incident on which Louis Dodge writes his story, "A Fight to a Finish," in the May *Adventure*, occurred at Cebu on the Island of Cebu in the P. I. Some of the boys of the 23rd were stationed outside Cebu. Sergeant Pete Darcy, a very good friend of mine, with two companions were surprised on their way to the town of Cebu by a bunch of Gugus. Pete and one of his companions were killed and cut up horribly with bolos and spears. The other one escaped in the manner Dodge describes by accidentally stumbling into this culvert.

I was in Cebu at the time, having been discharged from the *U.S.S. Boston*, my time in the navy having expired. There were some of the 23rd, the 18th, and some of the Tennessee boys there at the time. I got permission and also a gun and shells from Lieutenant Alexander of the Tennessee company and went out with the boys to square accounts for Pete. We cleaned up, too. I went into Manila Bay with Dewey May first; was discharged the following February at Manila. Went to Iloilo, thence to Cebu, returned to Manila, met some of the 23rd boys in the 11th Cavalry and took on with them in Troop I, 11th Cavalry. Would like to ask Dodge if he knew Joe Branzell or Micky Walsh, both sergeants of the 23rd at Cebu at that time.—F. W. CONNERS.

IF ONLY Captain North would get out of his head the idea that we don't listen eagerly to what he tells us about the Old West and about his brother, the well-known Major North. Talks like this from an old-timer are exactly our meat and we are always hungry. Talk to us again.

I have, contrary to custom, left in this letter the sentence about the new democracy, for it serves as sample of many similar replies indicating a strong and growing interest in right citizenship and its needs. Many Americans are thinking along the same lines. The results will surely show in the long run.

Columbus, Neb.

I see in *Adventure* a letter in Camp-Fire from Mr. E. A. Brininstool, in which he says a friend of his who was with my brother and the Pawnee Scouts is now living in the State of Washington. He didn't give his name or where he lives. I would very much like to know who he is and where he lives, as I thought I was the last white man left of the Scouts.

IN 1864-65 my brother had a company of one hundred Pawnees. He was captain and had a first and second lieutenant of his own choosing that were white men. They went with General Connor into the Powder River country in 1865 where they had several skirmishes and one real battle with the Cheyennes and Arapahoes. Then they came back to Fort Kearney and were mustered out in the Spring of 1866.

The following Winter, 1867, General Auger (who was in command of this department) had him enlist four companies of fifty men each with captain and one lieutenant, white men, for each company. He was allowed to choose his own officers and he had the rank of major. I was captain of one of the companies. That was the year they built the U. P. road from North Platte, Nebraska, to Cheyenne, Wyoming. We were guarding the track layers with one company (which happened to be mine most of the time), and the other companies were camped at different grading camps.

I WAS at Ogallala when a band of Sioux led by a brother of Spotted Tail ran off a herd of mules. My brother and myself with forty men followed them to the North Platte River, recaptured the

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mules, killed several of the Indians, among whom was Spotted Tail's brother, took ten of their horses and didn't lose a man.

Later that Summer the Indians ditched a train at Plum Creek Station, killed the train crew, burned several of the cars and carried off a lot of stuff. One of our companies was ordered there and the next day after their arrival one of our men came in and said the Indians were coming on the South side of the river. My brother took all of the best mounted men in the company (I believe there were thirty-five of them) and crossed the river and met the Cheyennes under Chief Turkey Leg (one hundred and fifty warriors), killed seventeen of them, took thirty-five horses, one boy and one woman prisoner.

NOT long after that General Sherman, General Harvey and General Auger met the chiefs Spotted Tail and Turkey Leg at North Platte to make a treaty with them. My brother was there and when he entered the tent where they were holding their council Turkey Leg knew him and turning to his interpreter he said:

"Ask this man if he still has the Cheyenne woman and boy prisoners."

My brother told him he had.

Turkey Leg said, "The woman is my wife. Tell him I have some white prisoners I will exchange with him."

Frank told him all right, so he sent a messenger to his camp on Medicine Creek and three days after they brought in two girls and three boys and my brother took the woman and boy up and made the exchange.

WE HAD several more fights with the Indians that Summer, but I must cut them out. We were mustered out in December, 1867. In 1868 there were two companies of scouts. I was not out that year. My brother had the most desperate fight of his whole career that year. But I have made this too long now. They were mustered out that Fall and in February, 1869, three companies were re-enlisted. That year we campaigned with General E. A. Carr. I was with Major Noyes on a Winter campaign when we were caught in a blizzard between the Republican River and the Frenchman's Fork. Fifty men were frozen so they had to have amputations of toes and fingers. Fifty horses and mules were frozen to death. That Summer we fought the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers under Tall Bull at Summit Springs in Colorado, and just about annihilated them. I could tell you of many things that happened that day but dare not try your patience.

WE WERE mustered out late in the Fall and the next Summer two companies were enlisted. This was 1870. We served only five months that year, and were mustered out. The scouts were not called out again till 1876 when we went on the Powder River campaign with General George A. Crook. We were mustered out at Sidney in the Spring of 1877. We had several fights that year and when we were mustered out our men had a lot of horses that we had taken from the enemy and General Crook had allowed them to keep them. The Government furnished them with rations, but wouldn't furnish transportation. So my brother and I went with them across-country from Sidney to their reservation in Oklahoma.

I have read over what I have written and am very much inclined toward throwing it in the stove. It is not what I wanted to write at all but I guess I'll let it go. Of course I don't expect you to put it in the Camp-Fire notes as there is altogether too much of it that probably is of no interest to any one but me.

About the first thing I read in *Adventure* is what you say about the new democracy. I am much interested.—CAPT. L. H. NORTH.

AT THIS writing, June second, the German hand has not been disclosed. Possibly it will not be fully disclosed for fifteen or twenty years. But the leopard can not change his spots. A Hun is a Hun. At birth all Germans were systematically taken in hand and molded into Huns.

They say the Huns have learned a lesson. I do not believe. They say the Hun people really desire peace. I do not believe. They say the Hun fangs have been pulled. I do not believe. They say the military clique has lost its grip on the minds of the other Huns. I do not believe. They say Germany can not build herself up into a first-class power again. I do not believe. They say the Huns have given up their idea of world domination. I do not believe. They say that when the Huns sign another scrap of paper they will abide by the signing, either because they are willing to abide by it or because others make them. I do not believe.

It is the same Hun. A year ago we loathed him for his calculated cruelty, maniacal ambition and bestial methods. Now, because we think him whipped, we gradually look upon him more and more tolerantly. But he is the same old Hun. And will remain so, unless a new generation can grow up breathing a different air.

They say he is no longer secretly shaping other peoples to his own purposes by world-wide propaganda. I do not believe.

HERE is a very interesting and new contribution to one of our old discussions:

San Antonio, Texas.

I have become interested in the Camp-Fire discussion of "What is the spirit of adventure, biologically considered?" For a long time I was where I could not obtain magazines conveniently and it is possible that in those months some one said what I have in mind now, but anyway here goes my opinion:

I think the word "adventure" often is confused with the word "experience." Adventure is what is known in biology as play, to a certain extent.

THERE are several basic needs in man—things he *must* do. One is economic, obtaining food and shelter; another is propagation of race and care

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of young; and yet another is play. All normal people play. They must play for relaxation. The play of civilization is travel, or swinging a golf-club, kicking a football, or it may be the theater, street-corner talk, the club, sewing-bee, riding or skating. It is the getting away from the pressure of living, the reaction from economic struggle.

So far, of course, you do not dispute me.

ACCORDING to my terminology that which we must do to have food and shelter is work, *experience*. That which we do for relaxation is *play*, and out of play comes *adventure*. Adventure is imbued with a sense of a good time, fun, play, success, victory. Experience may be imbued with a sense of hardship, failure, economic harshness.

Let me illustrate. A party of men in an automobile set out from their town to go West in search of land on which they will live and make a living. They have just the needed amount of money. On the road a highwayman holds them up and robs them. They are injured economically. They have not had what we think of as adventure, because the circumstance is attended with misfortune and failure. There has been no play. Therefore what they have passed through is *experience*.

Another party from the same town goes south on a pleasure trip. They likewise are held up. But they hide their money and the robber goes away empty-handed. They are victorious. They can laugh. They have had a play. Therefore, they tell of their startling *adventure*.

Now change the two circumstances slightly.

The land- or home-seeking party hides its money and the robber gets nothing. The party goes on and gets its land. They are successful. They feel good. They laugh about the robber's defeat. What might have been a hardship turns out to be mere play. They tell of their *adventure* under these circumstances.

The pleasure party that goes south is held up. In the affair one of the party is shot and killed by the robber. They no longer have had an adventure but a *terrible experience*. There is no play about it.

SO I get to a point: adventure grows out of the idea of play.

Take two tribes of our cave-time ancestors. One has plenty of food for a few days. They get well fed; their bellies are full and they are well and strong and ready for play. Nearby is a range of mountains and they decide to go just beyond to see what they can see. Over the mountains they meet wild animals, some hunger, flood waters, cold. But all the while they are merely playing. Always they are victorious, though often they just escape by the breadth of a hair—just enough for a laugh afterward. The things that befall them are wonderful adventures.

The other tribe has no food, is half sick. They go over an adjacent range of mountains to find food. They go for an economic reason. There is no fun, no play, in it. They meet ferocious animals and flood water, just as the others did. They suffer. They do not have fun. So there is handed down in that tribe a tale of hardship and killing experience.

So adventure is attended by the idea of play and things that make one good humored and happy.

WHAT sends the average Yankee down into Mexico to join a revolution? It is not often a sense of responsibility, nor of wickedness. It is to have a good time, to be entertained by something new. It, biologically, is the urge in him to go and play, to stretch his muscles and amuse himself by new sights.

A man pines for South Sea beaches. He wants to go there—why? To play—to take it easy, see new things, maybe try himself out now and then in a good red-blooded savage fight.

Of course, economic conditions may take him there, or economic needs may take him down a dark city alley at night. But when he gets back he hasn't had an adventure, has he, unless he can laugh and feel good about it and be amused and rested—as if he had had a good play?

YES, it is the spirit of play that whispers and coaxes and winks and gestures a man over the hills and far away. Or into dangerous dark alleys. Or into lonely houses. For what is adventure but the glamour of play, that hints of the Seven Seas and their lively ports, of strange sights, fine sacrifices, bold daring, of high love and red fighting and sportsmanship that throws back its head and laughs courageously in the face of hell?

Yes, considered biologically, the *spirit* of adventure is play, for adventure *is* play.—BARRY SCOBEE.

SEVERAL other instances of this kind at the front have been reported by Camp-Fire members. And here's hoping that this comrade is out of hospital as sound as ever.

A. E. F.

No, I am not an adventurer—just an ordinary "buck" in the Marines. Am now at Bordeaux in the hospital. Am flat on my back so excuse writing. Have just been reading the *Adventure* of March eighteenth.

Now here is an old story of *Adventure* magazine in a strange place. We went over at 5 A.M. on November first and passed through the town of Bayonville. About a kilometer past the town we stopped and "dug in." Being a temporary stretcher-bearer, I helped carry a wounded man to the First Aid Station now in Bayonville. After disposing of our patient we went into the officers quarters (German officers). In the front room of the first on a large table midst German papers and books was an *Adventure!*

Fish? Maybe so, but, as the fellows say, "Some —— funny things happened in the old war."

Consider myself fairly an old-timer. Been an "Adventurer" since "Gold at Sea" and "The Story of William Hyde."—Pvt. DONALD C. NORRIS, 43rd Co. 5th Regt., U. S. Marines, A. E. F.

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LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

In the following letter Robert V. Carr raises a number of points needing serious thought:

Los Angeles.

I can see where centralization of power in a few hands makes for efficiency, but can not see that anything short of the death penalty would prevent men when once they had been given great power, from finding ways and means to make that power absolute. It is a problem that every American should consider, but always to my mind comes that old bugaboo of human nature. True democracy, of course, is merely the Golden Rule, which neither the people nor their rulers practise. Yet intelligent men must work and strive and somehow see light ahead.—ROB'T V. CARR.

AS TO the first point, that when power is put into the hands of a few they will find a way to make it absolute. They will very probably try. But that is no reason for not centralizing power by a deliberate scheme of government. The practical point is that if you don't centralize power by means of governmental structure, some few will centralize it by unofficial, private methods. Exactly as has been done in our country already. Which is better and safer—a few chosen by the people, or a few chosen by themselves? A few publicly labeled as controllers, or a few operating behind the scenes? A few controlable and removable by the people through governmental machinery, or a few who are not reachable through any kind of popular machinery?

And the main point in our "New Creed for Americans" is that while delegated control must be centralized in a few hands for the sake of efficiency, at the same time and at equal speed there must be built up two things for the sake of democracy: first, *fundamental* control by the whole people over the delegated few, with adequate machinery for its expression; second, in the minds of the people themselves the habit of exercising that control and of exercising it cleanly and carefully.

WHICH brings us to "that old bugaboo of human nature."

Sometimes I think there has been no greater enemy to human progress than that much abused old argument, "But you can't change human nature." In one sense of course you can't. In one sense human nature is the same today as it was among the cave-men. But has not human nature developed, progressed, changed, improved during all these centuries? Have we developed no keener sense of right and wrong, no greater regard for the happiness and rights of others, than the savages who lived in caves? Are education and religion only meaningless, resultless, useless terms? Have they left the world as they found it thousands of years ago?

You can teach your boy not to rob your neighbor's house, can't you? And in spite of the "human nature" fact that it is his natural instinct to take what he wants regardless of other people's rights? Well then, is there any reason why you can't teach him not to rob the public funds, not to violate the rights of the people in general?

There is the meat and heart of the whole matter, and all the most learned specialists in the world can argue till they're blue in the face without shaking that one point.

The trouble is that we have never tried. We teach our children *individual* morals, but have been too stupid even to try to teach them *civic* morals. And quite naturally neither they nor we have an adequate supply of same.

We can't wave any magic wand and suddenly create a nation of good citizens. But we can *educate* our children and ourselves into being good citizens. It may take a generation or several of them, but it can be done, it must be done, and the sooner we begin the sooner it will be done. With every single step forward bringing us good returns in proportion.

BUT the big thing in Mr. Carr's letter is this: "True democracy, of course, is merely the Golden Rule." It is just that. And is the Golden Rule something that can't be taught to "human nature?" Believe me, the world would not have kept up the teaching of the Golden Rule for two thousand years if it had not been getting results.

Democracy is the Golden Rule. Yes, and the sooner we all realize it, the better for us and for democracy.—A. S. H.

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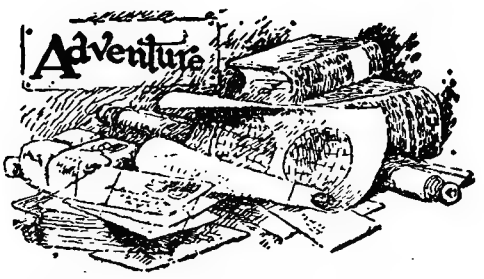

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Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

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High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

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(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

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A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
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3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

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GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

23. Philippine Islands
BUCK CONNER, Box 807A.—R. F. D. No. 10, Los Angeles, California. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

24. Japan
GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

25. Russia and Eastern Siberia
MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

26. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

27. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

28. ★ Africa Part 3 Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunno, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

29. ★ Africa Part 4 Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo.
CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

30. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

31. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing

J. B. THOMPSON, Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Major A. M. Lochwitzky.

The Great Hound of Tibet

IT IS larger than a St. Bernard, attacks strangers on sight, unless they carry Chinese paper bombs for protection, and is probably the boss of the canine family. Never hear of it? Then here's a little news:

Question:—Some time ago I read an article about the Tibet dog. Possibly you do not know him under that name so I will try to describe him as well as possible.

Weight: much heavier than St. Bernard dog. Color: muddy gray or brown. Slanty eyes, shaggy hair. Roars 'like a lion' as the author of the article affirms. He will tackle a lion and also generally get the best of him. The natives leave

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their children in his charge as protection against wild beasts. Supposedly only manageable by his master.

These and more qualities are attributed to him by this author, who is not trying to create sensational qualities but tries to give the truth.

What I want to know is, is there such a dog? Could it be brought over here and live—stand the climate? Has he these qualities? What would be the probable cost of having one sent over?"—C. F. MUELLER, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. McCreagh:—The "Tibet Dog" which you describe is probably the big meat hound of Tibet and Bhutan, known as the "Deggi" breed. I have seen many of these beasts; but I can hardly say that they impressed me as having such super-doggy qualities as you speak of. The weight would be, in the finest specimens, something over a St. Bernard, I should say, as the dogs are big-boned and stocky. Color ranges from brown into almost black.

They are certainly fierce; and two or three of them are a distinct protection to any mountain village. They come charging out, looking like young burros, and would immediately tear to pieces any stranger who didn't stink as much as the rest of the village. Small Chinese dynamite crackers (paper twists, looking very much like an onion) which explode on contact with quite a bang are a necessity to a white man traveling in Bhutan or Tibet.

The "roaring like a lion" and fighting one sounds to me like a little of the truth which is a darn sight stranger than fiction—because there are no lions in Tibet! The deep hoarse bark of the dogs might, however, be likened to a short roar.

The natives take quite some pride in the breed of these dogs, which is unusual in the East. A good one runs way up in price, that is, for that country. A good specimen could be bought for about thirty dollars. That, however, would be only the beginning of the expense of importing one. The cost of journey back to civilization must be considered; and this is impossible to fix definitely. A native would do it on about ten dollars; a white man would need nearer a hundred, and that would be cheap.

On the other hand, you couldn't trust a native to go and select a dog for you and bring it back. I don't know of any native who, having as much money as would be necessary to buy such a dog, would come back across the border at all.

After that, supposing your dog to be in Calcutta, most passenger boats running to England would accept the beast as a passenger at your risk. It would be in charge of the steward, and the cost, including feeding, would come to about ten pounds, British.

It would then be necessary to have an agent in London who would take over your hound and transship him to an American boat. This passage I can't guess about.

Having arrived—at a cost of about four hundred dollars, I should say—your mutt would live in Chicago and eat up little children and cops like any other wild beast of a cold climate would. Its greatest trouble would be in the Summer, not in cold weather.

I guess by now you have decided not to have a Deggi hound in your back-yard. But try writing to J. Jamrach & Co., Liverpool, England. They are wild animal dealers, and will undertake to get you anything that runs on feet, and, since they have their regular channels of service, they would probably do it a lot cheaper than you could.

Hunting the Florida Everglades

DON'T venture into the Everglades without a guide, warns Mr. Liebe. Also he gives you a wealth of other sound advice about that mysterious, little known fastness of Southern Florida, which is, by the way, a tip-top hunting country:

Question:—"I expect to make a hunting trip into the Florida Everglades and would like some information about them. I have hunted and trapped in the North but this trip will be a new one to me. The information I would like is:

What game is there in the Everglades?

Do you know of a good hunting section that can be reached in a small motor-boat from Fort Myers?

How can I get a copy of the game laws for this section?

Is it true that there are parts of the Everglades where white men have never been? Where are these parts?

How do the natives of the Everglades feel towards outsiders?"—CAPT. H. F. ROTHERY, Washington, D. C.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—You will find in the region of the Everglades, deer, bear, wild turkey, fox-squirrels and gray-squirrels. Quail are abundant in some sections, and occasionally a panther is met. There are also woodcock, snipe, woodhens, etc. Also otter is found in some sections.

You might possibly run up the Caloosahatchee River to a fair hunting ground in a small motor-boat. Most hunters, however, go out east by southeast in Lee County, with wagons carrying camping outfits, which are furnished by the guides; the guides also furnish dogs. You can't go into this country without a guide. Also you should take along hypodermics loaded with permanganate of potassium for possible bites from rattlers and cottonmouth moccasins—a twenty per cent. solution, I think it is, but you'd better see a doctor about that; you're not at all sure to be bitten, but if you are, it's a long way to medical aid. Leather leggings are nice to have along on this trip.

Address a letter to "The Florida State Game Warden, Tallahassee, Florida," and ask for a pamphlet copy of the State game laws, which are supposed to be sent out gratis. Unless I am mightily mistaken, the game season opens November 20th and closes March 1st.

It is possible that there are small sections of the 'Glades in which white men have never set foot. If so, it is most likely around where Lee, Dade, and Monroe Counties meet.

The natives of the 'Glades are straggling Seminole Indians. They are usually suspicious of white men, seeming afraid to trust them far. Generally speaking, they are a people of low mentality and are not very savage. I know of no recent instance where they have sought to harm white men.

A 12-gage repeater shotgun, 30-inch barrel, is a good gun for the 'Glades. Shells loaded with buckshot will get deer, bear, etc.; No. 2, 3, or 4 shot

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will bring down the turkey; No. 5 or 6 will do for the squirrels; No. 7 is big enough for quail, woodcock, etc. I would use soft shot, never chilled. If you are a good, quick rifle-shot, a rifle could be used for the bigger game, and soft-nosed bullets will do far greater execution than steeljackets.

Don't forget what I said about snake bites and guides. By the way, it takes three men to doctor a snake bite correctly: one to use the hypo, one to cord the limb above the bite, and one to split to the bottom the teethmarks and suck out the poison with his mouth, and this latter-named person should have no abrasion on his lips and he should have even sound teeth.

Recently a hunter down near Okeechobee got bitten on the forefinger and thumb almost at the same time. He put his bitten hand on a palmetto-root, chopped off the finger and thumb with a hatchet, jumped on his mule and rode five miles and to his brother, who put him in a Ford car and drove twenty-five miles to a doctor. He had made a handkerchief tourniquet for his wrist, and at that, at last accounts they were not sure he would live. I'm telling you that to show you that those 'Glade snakes are really dangerous.

The Forest Ranger's Life

IF YOU love the out-doors, there could be no more fascinating way to earn a good living than in the Forestry Service. But don't try the examination for forest ranger unless you can fill the following list of requirements:

Question:—"Please give me the following information if it is in your line:

What chances are there for a young man to get in to the forest rangers? I am not particular in what part of the West it may be, but prefer California, Oregon or Washington.

What are the qualifications?

What is the pay and equipment necessary?

What game is to be found in those States previously mentioned?

What arms would you advise one to use? Would a six-gun be useful?"—HAROLD R. LYON, Van Buren, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—To get on as a ranger or other officer of the Forest Service one must pass a civil service examination. The only men hired without this examination are such persons as obtain more or less temporary jobs or positions. These are clerks who must be proficient in typewriting, stenography and the elements of bookkeeping, salaries at entrance from $1,100 to $1,200 per annum. Minor clerks and stenographers hired from register kept by Government at large, salary $900 per annum. The laborers who cut firebreaks, fight fires, and do ordinary laboring work. These are paid the prevailing price of such labor in the section where they are employed. Then there are lookout men, who sit in glass huts on high peaks and ridges and watch for fires to start, locate them and warn the rangers by phone or heliograph, or both. These get about $65 a month and food, etc. Entrance salary for ranger $900 to $1,200. Apply to District Forester, 114 Sansome St., San Francisco, for this State. To District Forester, Beck Building, Portland, Oregon, for Oregon, Washington or Alaska. Other District Foresters are located in Missoula, Montana, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Those four cover the far West.

To be a ranger you must be able to ride well, to pack a horse or mule with a mixed lot of stuff so it won't come off, to make camp in practical manner, to work like the mischief and endure great hardships, to know how to handle men, how to build cabins and bridges, to make maps and to survey land, how to recognize trees by leaf, bark or chip, to cruise the standing timber and scale the cut lumber, how to fight fires successfully, how to handle stockmen and apportion grazing ground, how to fight like the deuce when occasion arises and how to keep your temper under abuse and mean treatment, how to judge a mineral claim to determine whether it is real or a fake for the purpose of filing on land in the reserve, etc., etc., including building telephone lines and keeping them in repair, building trails and roads and lookout huts. My nephew helped build the lookout on Shasta and they had to dynamite ice ridges to make a trail, and the wind blew sixty miles an hour there.

The pay I have already mentioned. The equipment required is a well-stocked brain, a good, sound, muscular body, a horse, saddle, blankets, six-gun and camp outfit for cabin use. Everything else is furnished. The ranger is obliged to buy his own grub and is allowed a fixed amount for buying horse feed, in addition to his salary. Tools and materials are all furnished by the service.

The game found in the three coast states is as follows:

Bear, deer, wolves, coyotes, bobcats, mountain lions, grouse, doves, quail, ducks, geese, squirrels and rabbits, besides the smaller fur-bearers such as badger, coon, ringtail cats, civet cats, skunks, mink, fisher, marten, weasels.

There are eight kinds of trout, salmon, and other lake fish.

A six-gun is all the ranger carries as a rule, but it is well to have a good rifle in a game country or where predatory animals are thick. The rangers are often instructed to help kill off wolves, mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes, where they trouble stock; and when a bear turns stock-killer they get after him. A .30-.30 or .32-.40 Winchester is good.

A West Indian Cruise

BEFORE venturing to cruise around the West Indies in a cabin cruiser, read what Capt. Dingle has to say about those waters. He has done the trick and knows. Incidentally, have any of you ever seen a 35 ft. cabin cruiser, capable of holding 10 days supplies, which could make 20 knots per hour, ocean travel? The boat is an interesting new type:

Question:—"Having seen your name mentioned in *Adventure* as an authority on the waters of the Caribbean and the West Indies, I am writing to you to ask for advice in suggestions for a trip among the Lesser Antilles as below:

"There is at my disposal a 35-foot cabin cruiser which can average 20 knots easily.

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The trip was intended to last from the first of September to the first of October, leaving Boston in September and arriving at Annapolis, Maryland, on the return trip on the last of that month.

No reasonable expense will be spared.

It was desired to visit some of the more isolated islands such as Saba Statia, Marie Galante, etc., also stopping at the Virgins for several days.

Now to get to the real questions.

Have you any idea what such a trip would cost?

Is navigation in those waters at all dangerous? I have had a six months' course in navigation at Annapolis, so I am rather more certain of the theoretical side than the practical.

Could you make some suggestions in helping me arrange my itinerary?

The boat can carry a supply of fuel for about ten days' steady cruising, and food for about two weeks for the number in my party—three. Would there be any difficulty in replenishing either supplies or fuel?

Is that part of the ocean at all liable to storms, unexpected, during that period?"—MIDSHIPMAN H. C. HAMILTON, Fortress Monroe, Va.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—You have apparently a very unusual boat. If any 35-footer, of cabin cruiser type, can carry ten days' fuel, it certainly seems impossible that she can average anything like twenty knots for that time on that fuel. I would think ten much more possible. But you may have such a boat, of course, and the only reason I have for suggesting doubt is that such a discrepancy in speed will make all the difference in the world in your cruising radius inside a month. If you discover that ten knots is fair speed for your boat to maintain during *real ocean* traveling, you would not be able to do much more than run down to St. Thomas and back, if you propose to stay several days. Assuming you can average that amazing twenty knots per hour for a month, without your boat shaking to pieces or the engine falling down, I will take your questions in rotation, and answer the first disappointingly.

I can not, nor any man, give a reasonably close estimate of costs of sea cruising in these days. If you find ports where prices are near normal you will be fortunate. Most probably you will find every place you visit with far different prices for the same commodity, and in many places commodities for small boat cruising are unobtainable at any price. Understand that most of the islands you suggest depend wholly upon outside sources for their own supplies, except a very small quantity of native produce which is both unsatisfying and hard to keep in a small cruiser. You must allow yourself a good margin of expenses and do the best you can. I can not even hint at a cost. In normal times three men might make this trip for a hundred dollars each, including fuel, unless the extreme high speed of the boat indicates an abnormal fuel consumption.

Navigation in the West Indies is difficult only to the novice, and unless some one on board your boat has practical experience in island navigation you would scarcely consider taking the trip, I assume. You won't draw much water, anyway, and if you can read a chart accurately, and know enough of compass error to steer you clear of suddenly changing variation, perhaps you may worry along all right.

As for hints on the itinerary, that too is hard, because I can not believe any 35-foot cabin cruiser can carry fuel enough to drive her twenty knots an hour for ten days, and unless she can do this you can never get down to Marie Galante and back to Annapolis in one month. You could easily use up your month in cruising around the Bahamas and the Inaguas, with a possible stretch as far as the Virgins, where you would find you had not many days to spare. If you get the Hydrographic Office's two volumes of the West Indies Pilot, Nos. 1 and 2, you will get a lot of data as well as an idea of the scope of your cruise.

There is only a possibility of replenishing stores or fuel in the larger ports at present, and neither are abundant anywhere. You might very easily get down to some small place like St. Eustatia or Marie Galante and find yourself stuck for gasoline.

Almost all of the region embraced in your proposed itinerary is within the hurricane area, and July to early October is the period when these sudden storms are prevalent.

I am sorry to have to be so discouraging; but I should be unfair to you to tell you anything different. And don't mind my having doubts as to your boat's speed capacity. In all my experience I have never come across such a boat with speed and fuel capacity for twenty knots an hour for ten days, that size, with living accommodation, which was heavy enough for real outside work. A lot of craft have made big speed for a short period in smooth water, but old ocean supplies the test which inevitably brings out the points of a craft.

The Bermuda and Havana racers, built to get the maximum speed compatible with safety, have never approached twenty, nor much more than half of that.

From Florida to Cuba, on to Porto Rico, and thence around such islands as lie near, is about the best itinerary I can suggest at present. This will give you a good chance of getting stores and fuel, and I'm sure will occupy your month very fully.

Hunting, Trapping and Homesteading in British Columbia

FOR real outdoor sport, whether it be hunting, fishing, mountain-climbing or exploring, this vast northern territory is almost peerless. Good homesteads, too, may still be taken up in this land of unusual opportunities:

Question:—"A friend and myself expect to take a two months' hunting trip into British Columbia as soon as we are mustered out of the service, and I am writing to ask for some information concerning a trip of this kind.

Approximately, how much would a two months' hunting trip for two men cost, including equipment? Also please tell me what kind of equipment would be required for this trip.

What kind of guns should be taken? What different kinds of game can one expect to find there?

What is the best time of year to go? Is a license required in British Columbia? If so, how much does one cost?

"Also, would appreciate it very much if you

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would give me any information you can concerning the trapping possibilities in British Columbia.

"Please put me in communication with some one from whom I can get information concerning homesteading and the land laws of that country. I have heard a great deal about leasing small islands off the coast, or purchasing them outright; will you please tell me whether or not it is possible to do this?"—J. A. S., A. E. F., France.

Answer, by Mr. Ed. L. Carson:—The estimated expense for a trip such as you outline has been placed at $1,000 per man, which includes everything. This, of course, means that he has his guides and all the trimmings of a real, high-grade expedition, and no doubt it is correct. Just the same I have an idea that a person can trim this down considerably and get as good results.

As to your equipment, that differs so greatly with regard to the section you propose to visit that it is hard to lay down any rule as to what you should take. There should be a tent, or fly, with a mosquito screen, the usual cooking outfit, guns, knives, etc. In a word, common sense plus a man's individual tastes should be sufficient guide in these matters.

Any modern high-powered rifle would be satisfactory on a short trip, as you could easily take in sufficient ammunition to last you, but in the event of making a long stay it is better to take a gun of common make such as a Winchester .44 or a .30-.30, as shells for these can be obtained almost anywhere.

When you ask, "What different kinds of game are to be found there?" I grin and ask, "Where?" for little old B. C. is some 400 miles wide and 700 miles long and embraces more different sorts of climate and landscape than any other place I know of on earth. You can have about every sort of climate from that of the south of England to the north of Greenland with its consequent varieties of wild life. Let us suppose that you are headed for the Cassiar, which is one of the best of the big-game countries in the world. You would probably run across bear, both black and silver-tip; deer everywhere in B. C. Big horn sheep occasionally; goat; plenty of feathered game; while a man will find an abundance of moose and caribou on which to live with the aid of his store grub.

To reach this district go by steamer to Fort Wrangel at the mouth of the Stikine River. The Hudson Bay boats used to meet the salt-water boats here but I understand these have been discontinued. The Barrington Trans. Co., however, has a fleet of gasoline boats that will take you up to Telegraph Creek, pardon me, "Glenora" now, where you can get everything required for your trip. John Hyland, the old-time outfitter, has taken the long trail, but the supply business is still handled by the estate and is very satisfactory. If it doesn't suit you there are others, Galbraith for one, but rest assured that you will be well treated by either or any of them.

There are also several good guides to be found there, such as the McClusky boys, Pat and Mike Dennis, Bear Lake Billy, Packer Johnny, Bob Reid and others, some of whom may have moved, but plenty are left for your needs. Hyland used to supply transportation, horses or canoes as the case might be, and I expect these can still be had there. Your guides will attend to that, however. What I want you to understand is that the matter of outfitting can safely be left till you are right on the spot, and thus save a lot of bother with customs and freight charges and, in fact, saving money, since these people can get stuff in there cheaper than an amateur. The middle of August is the best time to go in.

Your hunting license will cost you about a hundred dollars, all told. There are certain extras to the original fee of $25 for killing big game, such as to take a grizzly, moose, sheep, wapti, or caribou costs $25 per head extra. Write the Provincial Game Warden, Vancouver, B. C., for a copy of the game laws, as it is rather an intricate document and I would rather you took it first hand from a copy of the law than to take a chance of garbling it for you.

The trapping possibilities of British Columbia are almost unlimited, but this door was closed to non-residents by a recent act of the legislature. Now licenses are only issued to bona fide residents; that is, persons who have been domiciled and in actual residence in the province for a period of six months. In Alberta a license may be had by a non-resident for $25, and if a person was desirous of obtaining furs either for private use or as a business this would be the place to go, as the Peace River district is one of the centers of the fur industry.

As to homesteading in B. C. I may say that there are thousands of acres of excellent land still open for homesteading in the Skeena, Ootsa and Cariboo districts as well as the Peace River block north of Prince George. The Deputy Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C., is supposed to furnish all the maps and information required for this. Try it, and if you don't get what you want write Thos. D. Patullo, Minister of Lands, Victoria, B. C., and make a kick. This will get action every time.

As for the islands off the coast, I fear that any of these that were small enough for a one-man proposition would be rather shy on water, but if you have in mind the purchase of a tract of land, either large or small, write Mr. L. N. Solly, E. & N. Ry., Victoria, B. C., who will put you in touch with the right parties having land for sale, and it may be mentioned in passing that there is plenty of it and splendid stuff at that. You might also question the Land Office, Victoria, with regard to government land for sale, some of which may be had as low as $5 per acre.

Porto Rico

IF YOU are going to settle in the tropics, why not remain under the Stars and Stripes? Our great island possession of Porto Rico needs Americans—farmers, traders, shippers:

Question:—"As I am after information in regard to Porto Rico, I will thank you if you can help me.

Are there any chances for an American in the mercantile business? Can a man with a family make a fair living in the cities? What are the chances for investment in fruit growing or other pursuits of that nature. Must one know Spanish? How are climatic conditions? Do fevers prevail in the island?

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"I have had a desire for some years to locate in Porto Rico, but have had no exact information to guide me."—E. E. JONES, Lima, Ohio.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Porto Rico offers many opportunities both in mercantile and planting directions; and as for climate, since the American occupation resulted in the transformation of the antiquated sanitary arrangements, it is as good as can be found anywhere. While it is of advantage to know Spanish, this is not now so essential as formerly. As for location, if you went to the western end of the island you would find a region of perpetual vegetation, forced to abnormal growth by the daily shower which never fails but never annoys. On the southern and eastern parts it is much drier, irrigation having been resorted to recently to compensate for the lesser rainfall.

Fruit growing, farming, and tobacco offer good prospects for capital either with personal work or without it. And there is always a demand for agricultural hardware, as for well-digging outfits, paint, and builder's sundries.

Since you anticipate settling in Porto Rico, and naturally wish to secure the most recent information, I advise you to apply to the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Department, Washington, and to the United States Bureau of Information, San Juan, Porto Rico, stating very fully what you desire to do there, amount of working capital, family (with regard to schools, etc.), and ask their advice. From the two sources you will get much after-war data.

California Sheep Raising

THOSE who want to raise stock are taking an ever-increasing interest in sheep. And where can one profitably turn to sheep-raising in a more delightful climate than the Sunset State?

Question:—"My wife and I have always wished to locate in California, but being short of capital did not see what occupation would be profitable. Am now farm manager here in South Dakota, on 1,000 acres, and have from 2,000 to 2,500 sheep. Have become an expert sheepman.

Now what we want to know: is there any demand for a shepherd as manager of a sheep ranch anywhere in California? In what localities do they keep sheep? Please describe a California sheep ranch; tell us the living conditions, something about cost of living, and customary wages, climatic conditions, and whether or not it is beneficial to rheumatism.

Also, is there demand for manager of wheat farm?"—D. W. REED, Mt. Vernon, S. D.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—We raise thousands and tens of thousands of sheep out here. Every county has its herds. Generally the herders are Basques or Mexicans. In the north and Oregon they raise sheep inside fences. Oregon uses some coyote-proof fences around sheep. Shasta, Siskiyou, Sonoma, are all great sheep counties.

A California sheep ranch, as far as I have seen them, seldom has a sheep in sight. They are off in the timber or out on the plain, a long ways from the home, getting their living. Many sheepmen graze their sheep on the National Forests and have their sheep at home only in Winter, when the mountains are snowed under.

Conditions vary so greatly in different parts of this state that it would require a dozen descriptions to cover the sheep ranches. I have stopped at one where the house stood on a gentle slope, just below the mountains. It was a six-room cottage, with a good sized barn, stables and corrals. Not a sheep in sight, yet the owner told me he had 6,000 running in the mountains just back of his home. Another one I recall stood on a plain that was almost limitless to the eye and I could see 3,800 sheep spread out about a mile from the home, which was a two-story, wooden house, of the Gothic variety.

I have seen others where they raised nothing but fancy breeds, to stock the country with superior bucks, in an effort to raise the average, where they have their sheep all run in fenced pastures of alfalfa. These are the kind in Imperial Valley.

I advise you to write to Prof. R. F. Miller, University Farm, Davis, Cal., for further information. Be sure you enclose a stamped envelope.

He may not be as good-natured over your omitting it as I have been. I am sorry for any one that has to live in the cold of Dakota or Minnesota, having had twenty-two years of it myself, so I am replying.

As for living costs, living is no more expensive here all the year round than it is in Summer. You do not have to stock up with a lot of coal and wood to keep from freezing. This is a mild-climate state, though there is a wide variation between its several parts.

In Sutter County they run about 100,000 sheep and graze them every day in the year. In Siskiyou, Tehama, Shasta and Sonoma they run from 30,000 to 60,000 and have to feed only a few days a year, perhaps 40.

I do not know what they pay a sheepman who is expert. I have never had occasion to ask information along that line. As to wheat farms, there are none advertising for managers or superintendents and that is about my only way of hearing of a vacancy.

Write to Board of Supervisors, Redding, Shasta Co., Cal., for information about that section. To Yreka Chamber of Commerce, Yreka, Cal., for that about Siskiyou County. To the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce about Sacramento Valley counties. Tell each one what you have told me and you will get information that will be carefully prepared. You might include the Sonoma County Chamber of Commerce with the others.

Yes, this climate is good for one who aches with rheumatism. Most of us got over it here, who had it there.

Jeffrey's Hell

IT LIES way back of beyond, high up in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. A hiding-place where notorious outlaws have defied the law, and many a gallon of moonshine has gone from worm to jug. When a man goes there he must watch his step and be dead sure no one thinks him a "revenuer." Here's a chance to

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visit the place yet remain in your easy chair:

Question:—"I have just met a friend of mine who tells me there is a place in the Smokies called "Jeffrey's Hell," somewhere in North Carolina or Tennessee. He has never been there but we expect to be out soon. What would be a good starting place to go through there. Would it be best to begin in Tennessee?

Are there any wild animals such as bear and wildcats or bobcats?

What would be best to take for camping — tent and provisions?

Could you give us some idea as to the lay of the land and some places where we could buy a map. What part of Tennessee does it lie in, or does it lie in North Carolina?"—ROBERT B. BAKER, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—Your friend was correct. There is a place in the Smokies called "Jeffrey's Hell." It is a great basin, and filled with big and little trees, cliffs, and laurels so thick that the snakes are apt to lose their way in them. I have been around it, but never very far into it.

I understand a man named Jeffrey once declared that he'd cross it or "Go to ——," then went into it and was never seen again; but the bones of a man were found in a bear trap in there years afterward, and it was supposed that they were those of the ill-fated Jeffrey. This is the story that was told me by the people along Tellico River, which finds its source not far from Jeffrey's Hell. When I was there, some years ago, the Hell was used as a hiding-place by a locally notorious outlaw, whose name I shall not make public because, though he himself is dead, he still has living relatives.

This place lies in Monroe County, Tennessee, some thirty miles southeast of Athens, Tennessee, and the best approach to it is via Athens. There is a railroad running from Athens up to Tellico Plains, some twenty miles. You could probably go via a logging railroad from Tellico Plains almost into Jeffrey's Hell. It is possible that they are now logging the basin, in which event the romance of it and the chances of good hunting there would be somewhat spoiled.

There are deer, bear (but only a few), squirrels, raccoon, opossum, woodchuck, woodhens, flickers, here and there, more or less, in the Jeffrey's Hell country. Also there are some wildcats, panthers, rattlers, and copperheads. It is a very wild place. And, no doubt, it's still a "moonshine" country.

Take the smallest, lightest tent that will suffice. Take a small frying-pan, bacon, cornmeal for corn-cakes, etc.; cut your load as much as possible, for you'll have to carry everything after you leave the logging railroad.

For 25 cents you can buy a Rand-McNally map of Tennessee at almost any bookstore. The three best points of approach to Athens, by the way, are: Bristol, Tennessee; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and Asheville, North Carolina via Knoxville, Tennessee. Now let me give you some advice.

As you know, the U. S. is now mostly "dry" territory. This has put a high price on whisky, and that has put moonshiners in many sections to working overtime. There is a severe penalty for moonshining now, and you will find a desperate man wherever you find a moonshiner; he will take few chances on a stranger. You see, nearly all Revenue spies go into the mountains as campers, hunters, timber experts, surveyors, etc. All of this leads up to the advice I want to give you: Be careful what you do or say when you get into the hills. In fact, if it were me, I'd make the acquaintance of some mountaineer in Tellico Plains, and hire him to go along as a guide. It might save you a whole trainload of trouble.

A repeater shotgun with 30-inch barrel, with different sizes of shot to suit different sizes of game, is a good gun for this country. Also, make sure about game laws and hunters' licenses.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

PLEASANT, MR. or MRS. KARL. Formerly of Hayden, Arizona; last heard of in Silver City, New Mexico. Please write F. M. FOSTER, Care of *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MAC. Write and tell me where I can write you. Have important news for you about that concern we wrote to. Am at the same address.—BUG.

HELLMANN, WM. Last heard of in Baltimore, Md., April, 1919. Any one knowing the present whereabouts please notify his mother.—Address MRS. MARY HELLMANN, 720 Second Street, Trenton, N. J.

KENNER, ALFRED W. Last heard of at Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Va. Believed to be serving aboard U. S. S. *Eastern Chief*. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated.—Address F. J. MILLER, 2505 A Street, Lincoln, Nebr.

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POLLEN, JAMES. Twenty-five years old, height five feet seven inches, black hair, brown eyes, occupation a machinist. Lived at various times in Meriden and Torrington, Conn. Has worked as bellboy in a hotel and as bartender. Any one knowing the whereabouts of this man please notify me.—Address WILLIAM E. BURTON, Washington and Madison Avenues, Bridgeport, Conn.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

BLITZ or BLISS, JOE, or "YOUNG DIXIE." Formerly of 444 East 81st St., New York City. Last heard of in Columbia, Tenn. Write to your old pal. Any information concerning him will be appreciated.—Address N. FRIED, 298 East 3rd St., New York, N. Y.

LENNING, HARRY HOLLANDER. Resident of U. S. several years; once a swimming instructor, Tacoma, Washington, Y. M. C. A. Last heard of with Bakery Co., 325 Q. M. C. U. S. A. stationed at Florida. A friend would like to hear.—Address M. N. BUNKER, Care of Sports Afield Pub. Co., 542 S. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

WRIGHT, TOM. Have not heard from you since you left Galveston, Texas, in 1917. Please write your old friend from Fort Morgan. Met "Blondy" in Galveston May 10th; he is discharged from the Army. Am still in the wireless game and running from New York to Galveston as usual.—Address DAVID L. CAWMAN, S. S. *El Almirante*, Southern Pacific S. S. Co., Pier 49 N. R., New York City.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First August or Mid-August issues of Adventure. They can get the name of the inquirers from this magazine:

BARKER, HORACE; Belknap, Earl; Conant, Herman; Beecher, Harold; William Heywood; Coonerty, M. C.; Cosses, M. Angle; DeBolt, Alexander E.; Denniston, Thos. Greer; Duncan, Flossie; Divers, John Sterling; Earl, John Ernest; Flagg, Melvin L.; Fletcher, R. A.; Gillett, Frank M.; Griffith, Charlie E.; Heywood, Walter; Höffner, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick; Hoskins, Frank; Izat, John; Johnson, A. L. or L. A.; Klinger, Irving; Knotte, Maxmillan Louis; L. S. F.; Lentz, Geo. Theo.; Magill, Robert; Martin, Walter; McColl, John B.; Mead, Joseph T.; Morrow, Thomas; Parker; Parrott, Thos. D.; Phillips, Orrestes C.; Powell, Malcolm; Rose, Jack or John LeMon; Roup, R. A.; Watson, Pvt. A. W.; Corp. Fee,; Sgt. Laucatch; Wheeler, Harold; Wickcliff, Earl; Wunemburg, Wm. C. G.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity:

ARNOLD, TED; Aspinartos, A.; Brady, Grover C.; Brison, Clarence F.; Bishop, L. O.; Benson, E. W.; Babcock, Lucius A.; Beaton, G. M.; Carr, Mrs. Fred; Cosby, Arthur F.; Collins, John; Casselberry, Tex; Coles, Bobby; Campbell, Frank U.; Dorr, H. S.; Engleby, B.; Geers, Mrs.; Harvey, Ted; Hines, Joseph; Harris, Walter J.; J. C. H.; Hart, Jack; Harding, James; Harrison, Tillson L.; Hiskert, Wm.; Hunt, Dan'l O'Connel; Johnson, Walter R.; Kuckaby, William; Kohn, Edward; Lee, Wm. R.; Lofler, Mrs. Harry; Leighton, Capt.; Larisy, Jack; Lee, C.; "Lonely Jock"; MacDonald, Donald Carr; MacMahon, J. A.; MacNarnee, Alva I.; Miller, B. J.; Morrisy, K. A.; McCord, P. A.; Maples, C. M.; McGraw, John; Nelson, Frank Lovell; Nichols, Leon; Norman, Cook William; Richards, Lewis S.; Reid, Raymond; Rodgers, Stewart; Reed, H. W.; Schmidt, Walter; Scott, James F.; Seaman, W. E.; Shephard, H. O.; St. John, Irving T.; Stanley, Jack; Swan, George; Taylor, Jim; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Delos, E.; Ward, Frank B.; Williams, Bertram I.; Williams, Ray; Williams, W. P.; Western, S. S.; Yelton, Roy T.; Young, Leon.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Lieutenant Wm. S. Hilles; G. H. Bennett; Bryon Chrisholm.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you. Satisfactory proof of identity must accompany each claim for mail.—Address J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
MID-SEPTEMBER NUMBER

Ten stories of adventure in past days and present are between the covers of our next issue. Two are mentioned on the second page. Here are the others:

FAIR LOOT — ***By Robert J. Pearsall***
By a river dike in China *John Partridge* gets a warning.

THE ARCH-TIGRESS OF AUSTRIA — ***By Agnes and Egerton Castle***
The story of *Denis O'Sullivan* in the wild days after the Revolution in France.

TOM SMITH — ***By E. A. Brininstool***
How a cool-headed man cleaned up a bad town.

PIRATES FROM PIPEROCK — ***By W. C. Tuttle***
Ike and *"Dirty Shirt"* meet *"Solemn" Sales*, and the fun begins.

HEAD-HUNTERS AND GOLD — ***By Clyde B. Hough***
Down in the Philippines the search for gold is a dangerous one.

LYNCH LAWYERS. Part II — ***By William Patterson White***
In which *"Red" Kane* and his brother *Tom* find things getting dangerous—and exciting. A Western story.

THE SNAKE — ***By Arthur O. Friel***
A story of Brazil and the terror that lurked in the jungle.

THE IRON DOLLAR — ***By Henry Leverage***
Two years on a whaler and paid with one lone dollar. *Steve Larsen* sets out to get even.

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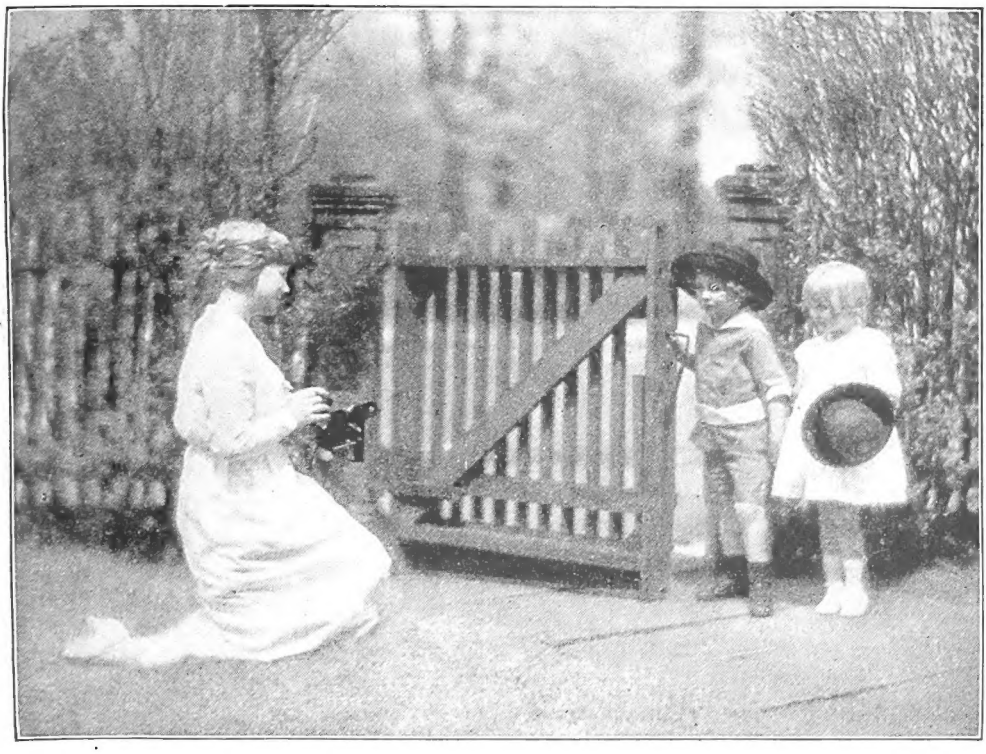

Keep a Kodak Story of the Children

In every day of their young lives are events of almost dramatic interest: The painted gallop across the porch on the hobby horse; the adventure with the puppy in the garden; sister's new frock and brother's tricycle; that important morning when with stout hearts they first trudge off to school—such pictures, preserving forever the childhood days, mean a world of comfort to mother's heart—yes, and to father's too.

And just a few years afterward: "That's you, Polly, when you were—let me see. Oh yes, the film says it was August eight, nineteen nineteen, your fourth birthday. And Junior was five."

Every picture worth taking is worth at least a date, if not a title. It's all very simple with an Autographic Kodak, as simple as pressing the button. And Autographic film costs no more than the other kind.

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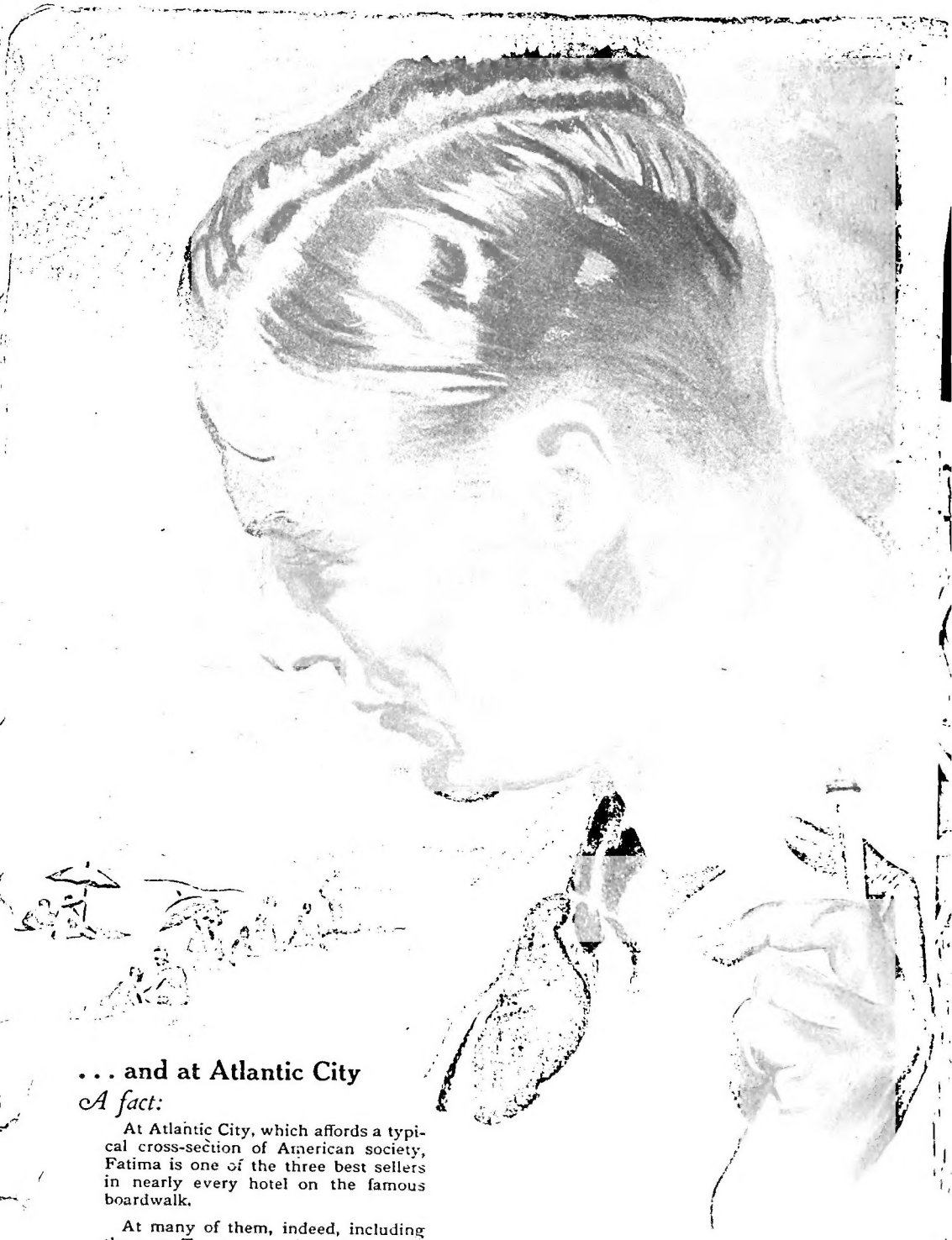

. . . and at Atlantic City

A fact:

At Atlantic City, which affords a typical cross-section of American society, Fatima is one of the three best sellers in nearly every hotel on the famous boardwalk.

At many of them, indeed, including the new Traymore and Haddon Hall, Fatima is steadily the leader.

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co.

FATIMA

A Sensible Cigarette

NOTE: Leadership facts such as these offer interesting proof both of Fatima's pleasing taste and of the fact that they can be smoked freely without worry about "too many."

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